

**THE TRAGEDY
OF SILESIA
1945-1946**



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A DOCUMENTARY
ACCOUNT WITH A SPECIAL SURVEY
OF THE ARCHDIOCESE
OF Breslau

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FOREWORD

We, the Catholic Bishops of Germany, feel we can no longer keep silent on the subject of the terrible fate which has befallen more than ten million people in the German eastern territories, — the Germans in Silesia, East and West Prussia, Pomerania, in the Sudetenland, and also in Hungary, Roumania, and southern Slovakia, — people whose ancestors for the most part settled in this territory seven and eight centuries ago and introduced civilization there.

All these people have been threatened with forcible expulsion from their native towns and villages and with deprivation of their entire property, without any guarantee of a fitting and adequate subsistence in Western Germany being offered them.

This dreadful fate has already befallen millions, indeed, in Silesia alone several millions. Their expulsion has been effected with horrible brutality and regardless of all human rights and feelings.

Despite the fact that the Control Council officially put a stop to forcible expulsions, they have nevertheless continued. The Germans who have remained behind in the territories in question are being harassed to such an extent that they are obliged to leave the country unless they manage to protect themselves by resorting to another nationality.

The world remains silent on the subject of this terrible tragedy, and it seems as if an Iron Curtain has been let down to conceal this part of Europe.

We are well aware of the fact that Germans in the territories in question committed terrible crimes as far as members of other

nations were concerned, — but since when has it been permitted to wreak one's vengeance on the innocent and to avenge crime by crime! Those who really are guilty should be called to account unrelentingly. But who can be held responsible for all the deaths of children, mothers, and aged persons? Who can be held responsible for the despair of the many thousands who, in their unspeakable distress and misery, have committed suicide?

We implore and beseech the world to remain silent no longer. Those in power must prevent might from coming before right and the seeds of hatred from being sown which will only cause more evil.

In the name of justice and charity we plead for our fellow-countrymen in the eastern territories. We earnestly exhort the true believers of the Christian faith to remember the sufferings of these people in their prayers, and to welcome those refugees from the east, who come to us, in the spirit of Christian love and charity.

*Proclamation by the Bishops of Western Germany
Cologne, January 30th, 1946.*

PART ONE

SECTION I

A Survey of the History of Silesia and the
Diocese of Breslau1) *Germanic and Slavonic Tribes in Silesia prior to A. D. 1000*

The earliest reliable information we have about the territory of Eastern Germany is to be found in the works of the Roman writers, Caesar (100-44 B. C.), Pliny the Elder (died 79 A. D.), and Tacitus (55-120 A. D.),¹ and in the works of the Greek writers and geographers, Strabo (about 20 A. D.), Plutarch (55-120 A. D.), Ptolemy (about 140 A. D.),² and Procopius (after 562 A. D.). Their chronicles have been substantiated by numerous objects discovered in the course of excavations³ in Silesia. By the time Christianity began to spread Silesia had long been settled by Germanic tribes. The earliest migration of Germanic tribes to Silesia occurred about the seventh century B. C. Flat stone sarcophagi and cinerary urns with the

¹ Tacitus in his *Germania* (98 A. D.), Chapt 43, says. "Moreover, in the territory behind the Marcomanni and the Quadi (Bohemia and Moravia) there are the Maisigni (territory of the Upper Oder), Cotini, Osi, Buri (West Carpathians), of these the Marsigni and Buri are very like the Suevi in language and dress. All these tribes dwell rarely in the lowlands, usually only on wooded heights, mountain peaks and ridges. The land of the Suevi is divided and separated from other territory by a long mountainous range (Sudetic Mountains); on the other side of this mountainous range there live a number of tribes, of which the Lugi is the largest, consisting of several communities. The most powerful of these are the Aru (between the Neisse and the Oder), the Helvecones, Manimi, Elysi, and the Nahanarvali (between the Oder and the Vistula)."

² Ptolemy in his account of the ancient tribes about 150 A. D. says: "South of the Semnones, on the other hand, there live the Silingi (a tribe of the Vandals which has given the country its name, place of worship on the Zobten near Breslau), south of the Burguntae there live the Lugi Omani. south of these the Lugi Didumi as far as the Asciburgius Mountains; south of the Silingi are the Calucones on both sides of the Elbe. In the east at the foot of the Asciburgius Mountains there are the Corconti and the Lugi Buri as far as the source of the Vistula." Quoted in *Merian*, Schlesien, 4th annual series, No. 3, p. 65. Edited by Heinrich Lippe, published by Hoffmann and Campe.

³ Cf. *Schlesiens Vorzeit in Bild und Schrift* (Journal of the Silesian Antiquarian Society), Vol VII, p. 113 ff., Vol IX, p. 1 ff. Cf. also *Alt-schlesien*, publication of the Silesian Antiquarian Society edited by Hans Seger. See also M. Hellmich, *Die Besiedlung Schlesiens in vor- und fruehgeschichtlicher Zeit*. Breslau, 1923.

features of the dead carved on them ⁴, which were found in Silesia, are typical of this period of early Germanic civilization, which was not, however, of long duration and ended about the fourth century B. C. In the course of the fourth century the Celts who had migrated to Silesia from Bohemia and Moravia were driven out by Eastern Germanic invaders from north-east Silesia. To judge from the remains found in the course of excavations these new settlers were part of a large Eastern Germanic cultural movement which extended from the eastern district of the March of Brandenburg through Silesia and South Poznan as far as Poland and Galicia and continued for about half a millennium, until about 400 A. D. It comprised the vast tribal community of the Vandals or Lugi (Lygii), whose names are mentioned in the chronicles of the aforesaid ancient writers ⁵ The territory we now call Silesia derived its name from the Silingi, one of the Vandal tribes. ⁶ For more than a thousand years Silesia was inhabited by these Germanic peoples, who cultivated the land and, to a remarkable degree, brought civilization ⁷ to this territory at a time when South and West Germany were still Roman colonies.

As regards the finding of Vandal remains dating from the beginning of the fifth century there is a sudden gap. We know from historical sources ⁸ that the Silesian Vandals were caught up in the migration of peoples which began about 375 A. D. and was caused by the advance of the Huns, who, incidentally, by their invasion into South Russia put an end to the rule of the Goths. In the course of this migration the Silesian Vandals reached Spain and North Africa, where, enervated by the climate and by luxurious living, they were soon vanquished by the Byzantine general, Belisar (534 A. D.)

⁴ Cf. Hans Seger, "Vorgeschichte Schlesiens" in *Geschichte Schlesiens*, Vol. I, p. 18 ff., edited by the Historische Kommission fuer Schlesien under the supervision of Hermann Aubin. Published by Priebatsch's Buchhandlung, Breslau, 1938 (referred to in the following footnotes as: "Aubin") — See also K. Engelbert, *Archiv fuer schlesische Kirchengeschichte*, Vols VII and VIII (referred to in the following footnotes as *Archiv*) August Lax, Hildesheim, 1949/50

⁵ On Ptolemy's map (about 140 A. D.) the territory on the right of the Lower Vistula is occupied by the Goths, the territory on the Baltic Sea between the Vistula and the Oder by the Rugii, the territory further south by the Alvaestae and Burgundae. The territory between these tribes and the Sudetic Mountains is inhabited by various tribes of the Lugi.

⁶ The word Siling = Zobtenberg, the religious centre of the Vandal tribes, became Slens in Slavonic, then Slensane = Silingiland, and finally Silesia.

⁷ See *Schlesiens Vorzeit*, loc. cit., Vol. VIII, p. 20 ff. Numerous remains of cultural value dating from the time of the Vandals have been found in graves and settlements in Silesia. Unfortunately, the Silesian Art and Archeological Museum in Graupen Street in Breslau was demolished in the spring of 1945, during the siege of the city. — Cf. also *Altschlesien*, loc. cit., Vol. 4, No. 4, p. 229 ff. Breslau 1934.

⁸ Aubin, *Geschichte Schlesiens*, Vol. I, p. 556 ff.

Remnants of the Germanic inhabitants of Silesia remained behind, in particular in the Silingi territory of the Zobten and in the region of Altvater, as is indicated by remains dating from the fifth century which have been found there⁹ and is also corroborated by the chronicles of Procopius, who mentions the ancient custom of the Vandals of leaving a Vandal minority behind that faithfully preserved the old traditions of the tribe.¹⁰

From about the year 600 onwards the Slavonic tribes, who until then had inhabited the territory further to the east, under the onslaughts of the Avars, slowly and gradually advanced into the territory which now constitutes Eastern Germany, and in the course of time absorbed the Germanic tribes who had remained behind, above all in the mountainous regions. There are no historical chronicles available which give an account of the early beginnings of the Slavonic settlement of Eastern Germany, a fact which proves that it was not a large and uniform movement.¹¹

We find the first indications of a state organization under the Slavonic tribes about the year 630 when Samo, allegedly a Frankish merchant, established his realm between the Oder, the Elbe, and the Danube. It is not until the ninth century, however, that we find indications of a more firmly established Slavonic settlement in Silesia. It was during this era that the first permanent Slavonic kingdoms were established. By the acquisition of Bohemia Swatopluk (died 894) founded the Great Moravian kingdom, which extended as far northwards as the Oder. In the years 906 to 908, soon after his death, it was, however, conquered by the Hungarians and superseded by the kingdom of Bohemia. During the years that followed Silesia was allied to its southern neighbour, the Slavonic kingdom, and its position as regards religious matters was also the same.¹²

⁹ The most important find is the golden neck-ring of Ransern (cf *Schlesiens Vorzeit*, Vol VIII, p 36). Seger assumes Gothic or Hunnish influence. Cf also Dr Otto Wenzelides, "Die Geschichte des Ostsudetenlandes" in *Altvaterbote* (pastoral and local journal, edited by A Sauer, Stetten on Danube), 1949, No 4, p 19 — The inhabitants of the so-called Olsa region who manifest certain elements of German culture still call themselves Slonsaks = Silesians. Cf Harald Laeuen *Polnisches Zwischenspiel*, p 232 Hans von Hugo-Verlag, Berlin, 1940. — Cf also *Beitraege zur schlesischen Landeskunde*, p 90, where it is assumed that Germanic elements continued to exist during the Slavonic period.

¹⁰ Aubin, *loc cit*, pp. 56-57

¹¹ Remains found in the course of excavations in the walls of Kleinitz, in the district of Gruenberg, in 1936 belong to a transition period, presumably in the seventh and eighth centuries, between the late Germanic and the early Slavonic eras, and thus also prove that settlement by the Germanic tribes must have continued until the time of the Slavonic infiltration. Cf also Aubin, *loc. cit*, Vol. I, p. 59.

¹² In 845 fourteen Bohemian princes (Zupane) were baptized in Regensburg. Cf *Archiv*, Vol VIII, p. 2

From about the year 800 onwards Moravia belonged to the mission territory of Passau and Salzburg whilst Bohemia belonged to that of Regensburg. It is thus probable that the earliest Christian missionaries from South Germany passed through Bohemia and Moravia and reached Silesia, for the realm of the ruler of Bohemia, Vratislav I (894-921), who founded Breslau (Vratislavia), probably about the year 900, in order to protect the ford at the Oder, extended over a large part of Silesia. Vratislav is also assumed to have built the castle of Breslau at St. Martin's. Although St. Wenceslaus (died 938) and his grandmother, Ludmilla (died 927) were killed by heathens, Christianity had, however, spread to Bohemia and to that part of Silesia south of the Oder which was allied to it by 950. In 968 the archdiocese of Magdeburg was founded by the Emperor Otto the Great for the special purpose of a mission to the Slavonic tribes. Soon afterwards, in the year 973, the diocese of Prague was founded, which, until 1344, however, remained under the administration of the archdiocese of Mainz. In those days political and ecclesiastical boundaries usually corresponded, and for this reason Silesia, south of the Oder, as long as it came under Bohemian rule remained under the administration of the diocese of Prague.

Between the Oder and the Vistula Duke Dago-Misika (Mieszko I, probably a descendant of the Normans)¹³ founded the kingdom of Poland¹⁴, the name Poland first being mentioned in the eleventh century in the Quedlinburg annals and the chronicles of Thietmar of Merseburg. It included, for the most part, the later provinces of Gnesen, Poznan, Kalisch, Kujavien, and Masovien, but not Pomeralia, Silesia, and Cracow. In 963 Dago-Misika was defeated by Margrave Gero and became a tributary subject of the German Empire and later, "as a friend of the Emperor", a liege subject of the German Empire (this is mentioned in historical records after 986).¹⁵ In 966 he was baptized in the Christian faith and in 968 he founded the diocese of Poznan, which at first came under the administration of the diocese of Magdeburg, probably founded in the same year, and had as its first bishops two Germans, Jordan and Unger. About 990, aided by the Germans¹⁶, Dago-Misika conquered Central and Lower

¹³ Aubin, *Geschichte Schlesiens*, Vol 1, p 63 ff.

¹⁴ Cf E Hanisch, *Die Geschichte Polens*. 1923

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p 65.

¹⁶ In this Bohemian-Polish war, exact details of which have not been handed down, German troops belonging to Archbishop Gieseler of Magdeburg and to Margrave Ekkehard of Meissen, etc. fought on the side of the Poles. (Cf. Aubin, *loc. cit.*, p 67) Thietmar von Merseburg in his chronicles of the wars of the Emperor Heinrich II (edited 1917) records the following: Thereupon he sent in

Silesia and extended his realm southwards as far as the Sudetic Mountains and westwards as far as the rivers Queis and Bober. The province of Glatz, however, remained under Bohemian rule.¹⁷ Upper Silesia, including the district of Cracow, was most probably not conquered by Poland until after the death of Boleslaus II (972-999), the grandson of Vratislav I of Bohemia, when a dispute arose in Bohemia regarding the succession to the throne.

2) *The Early History of the Diocese of Breslau* (Silesia as part of Poland from 990-1163)

In 995 the second bishop of Prague, St. Adalbert, set out on a mission to the heathen Prussians, but was slain in 997 near Fischhausen and buried in Gnesen. The German Emperor Otto III made a pilgrimage to his grave in the year 1000. Otto III at that time renounced his imperial right to appoint bishops in favour of the Polish duke, Boleslaus I Chrobry, whom he had designated as a "brother and fellow-worker of the Empire" and as the "friend and ally of the Holy Roman Empire". This put an end to the claims of the archdiocese of Magdeburg to the territories further east, claims which had been planned when the diocese of Magdeburg was founded in the year 968.¹⁸ On the occasion of the Gnesen celebrations in the year 1000 and on the strength of an agreement between the Emperor and Boleslaus I and with the consent of Pope Sylvester II, the archdiocese of Gnesen was founded for Poland which was bound in allegiance to the German Empire, and the dioceses of Breslau, Cracow, and Kolberg were placed under the administration of this archdiocese.

advance twelve select troops of the main army to the town of Nemzt (now called Nimptsch) which is called thus, because it was built by our people (for niemci in Slavonic means Germans) It lies in the district of Silensi which in former times derived its name from a very high and large mountain; this mountain, where unpius heathen services were held, was worshipped by the natives because of its size and nature (Quoted in *Merian*, Schlesien, loc cit., 4th annual series, No 3, p 65)

¹⁷ This explains the fact that the so-called vicariate-general of the province of Glatz in Lower Silesia is even now still part of the archdiocese of Prague — The territory north of the Oder did not belong to the diocese of Prague

¹⁸ Aubin, *loc cit.*, Vol. I, p. 67. Cf. also the following. F X. Seppelt, "Geschichte des Bistums Breslau", a detailed study of the history of the diocese of Breslau, in *Realhandbuch des Bistums Breslau*, p. 27 1929. — Prof. Dr. Emil Brzoska, *Neunhundertfuenfzig Jahre Bistum Breslau*, p 26 ff. and p. 154 ff Koenigsteiner Rufe, Koenigstein, 1951 — P Kehr, "Das Erzbistum Magdeburg und die erste Organisation der christlichen Kirche in Polen" in *Abhandlungen der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Phil-hist Klasse*, pp. 1-68 Berlin, 1920.

In his chronicles Bishop Thietmar of Merseburg (975-1018) mentions Johannes as the first bishop of the diocese of Breslau which was founded in the year 1000. This comprised the territory of Silesia as it was then, including the district of Crossen on the Oder which now belongs to the March of Brandenburg, but not, however, Lusatia which in those days belonged to Meissen, nor the province of Glatz which since then and up to the present time has always belonged to the diocese of Prague, nor those parts of the districts of Leobschuetz and Ratibor which at present still belong to the archdiocese of Olmuetz. It was not until after 1233 that Austrian-Silesia became part of the diocese of Breslau, whilst the district of Neustadt in Upper Silesia and that of Schwiebus did not come under this diocese until after the Thirty Years' War. The deaneries of Beuthen and Pless, that is to say the central areas of the Upper Silesian industrial region, were not incorporated in the diocese of Breslau until 1821. This ecclesiastical integration influenced the political unity of Silesia very considerably in the years that followed. About the middle of the twelfth century the entire territory was uniformly designated as Silesia and its boundaries corresponded for the most part to those of the diocese of Breslau.

In the beginning, however, there was but little indication of any ecclesiastical partition of this vast territory. The earliest kind of partition, namely into parishes, which had been adopted during the Slavonic era and was only superseded during the German settlement of Silesia by a closer network of pastoral offices, corresponded roughly to the old partition of the country into castle domains, the so-called "Kastellanei"¹⁹, which represented the administrative seats of the country's defense system and the collecting centres for taxes to be paid to the ruler of the country, and were later increased in number. These castle domains also became ecclesiastical centres, inasmuch as the earliest churches were erected near to the castles which afforded a certain protection. For a considerable period of

¹⁹ See Aubin, *loc. cit.*, Vol I, p. 245 ff. The Papal Bull proclaimed by Pope Adrian IV in 1155 contains the first list of names of fifteen places, by which castles are meant, the domains of which came under the diocesan administration of the bishop. There were probably about twenty castle domains at that time. The Papal Bull of 1245 for the diocese of Breslau mentions twenty-two castles. Of these, seventeen were situated in the Duchy of Silesia, namely the following: Beuthen on the Oder, Breslau, Bunzlau, Glogau, Groeditzburg, Crossen, Lachn, Liegnitz, Lueben, Mültsch, Naumburg on the Bober, Ottmachau, Ritschen, Sagan, Sandewalde, Schweinhaus, and Steinau, whilst five were situated in the Duchy of Oppeln, namely Cosel, Oppeln, Ratibor, Teschen, and Tost. In addition, several other unknown places are also mentioned — Cf. also H. F. Schmid, *Die Pfarrorganisation auf westslawischem Boden während des Mittelalters* 1938.

time there are no reliable records available about the diocese of Breslau, owing to the fact that the country was involved in war, for Bohemia was trying to regain Silesia. It is not until the year 1051 and from then onwards, when the political situation became more settled again, that the ancient ecclesiastical records²⁰ contain a complete list of the names of the bishops. The number of churches still corresponded roughly to the number of castle domains, one of which, Ottmachau, appears to have been part of the diocese, so that the bishop was not only the ecclesiastical head but also the secular lord of this district.²¹

It was customary in the kingdom of Poland, on the death of its ruler, to divide up the territory into as many parts as there were sons. Thus Poland was very soon partitioned into a number of fairly independent principalities. In addition to his own share of territory the eldest duke also received the district of Cracow and the office of seniority, that is to say, a kind of supremacy over the other principalities. He thus stood for the unity of the kingdom. In 1138 the Silesian duke, Vladislav II, became senior ruler²², but he was unable to hold his own against his relatives, and in 1146 he was obliged to seek refuge with his liege lord, King Konrad III of Germany. The latter did not, however, succeed in enforcing Vladislav's claims. It was not until 1163, when the Emperor Frederick I Barbarossa advanced into Silesia with his armies, that the territory was finally restored to the sons of Vladislav, who had died in 1159 and had been buried in the monastery at Pegau, north of Leipzig. Boleslav I, called Boleslav the Long, received Central Silesia and after the death of his brother, Konrad, Lower Silesia, too, whilst Mesko received Upper Silesia.

It was fortunate for the ecclesiastical development of Silesia during these difficult years that the head of the diocese of Breslau was an extremely active man, namely Bishop Walter (1149-1169). He came from the western territory of the German Empire, from the district of Namur, and as provost of the monastery of Malonne had

²⁰ The oldest ecclesiastical record of Breslau bishops was written in the monastery of Heinrichau in 1207. See Seppelt, "Geschichte des Bistums Breslau", *loc. cit.*, p. 7, and, in particular, p. 127 ff, which contain a list of the names of the bishops and suffragan bishops of Breslau. Cf also Seppelt, *Das Bistum Breslau im Wandel der Jahrhunderte*. P. Pattloch Verlag, Aschaffenburg, 1948.

²¹ The bishop of Breslau was given secular supremacy over the Ottmachau district after the big ecclesiastical dispute during the time of Bishop Thomas II (1270-1292). Cf *Archiv*, Vol. IX, pp. 9 and 19.

²² Cf the last will and testament of Boleslaus III in 1138 in *Archiv*, Vol. VIII, p. 12. At that time Poland was divided up into four parts.

introduced the Augustinian prebendary order there.²³ Since the members of the ruling house had been driven out of the country and there was thus no secular head, Bishop Walter sought the protection and support of the Pope for the early Silesian church. One of the earliest charters pertaining to Silesia dates from the time of Bishop Walter, namely the charter of protection granted by Pope Adrian IV on April 23, 1155.²⁴ This charter in the first place lists most of the castle domains belonging to the diocese, then it mentions the various estates belonging to the diocese of Breslau, separate property scattered throughout the entire diocese which in the course of time had been given to the diocese by deed of gift, and finally it refers to the separate castle domain of Ottmachau, which constituted one of the earliest possessions of the diocese, and to the castle domain of Militsch, which belonged to the cathedral chapter. Thus, at the end of the first epoch in the history of the diocese of Breslau we have a list of the revenue of the latter as confirmed by the highest ecclesiastical authority.

3) *The Golden Age of the Diocese of Breslau (1163-1376)*

The era of German resettlement

Silesia ruled by its own dukes

It is true that the ruling house of Silesia had been forced to flee to the German Empire²⁵ owing to unfortunate circumstances, but this fact nevertheless had very beneficial results as far as the ruling house and the country itself were concerned. Existing relations, dating from the time of Silesia's vassalage to the German Empire, between the Silesian ruling house and the German royal families were thus strengthened, resulting in matrimonial alliances with German

²³ The results of recent research show that the former assumption that Bishop Walter appointed Premonstratensians to the cathedral chapter of St Martin's in Breslau is no longer tenable (Cf. *Archiv*, Vol. IX, p 3 ff). In addition to his activity as a reformer his greatest achievement was the erection of the first stone-cathedral, which was built in the Romanesque style on the spot where the present cathedral now stands (Cf. *Archiv*, Vol IX, p 7). After the Mongol invasion it was replaced by the present Gothic building.

²⁴ Until 1945 the original charter was preserved in the Diocese Archives in Breslau which were damaged but not demolished during the siege of the fortress of Breslau in the spring of 1945. The purpose of the Charter of 1155 was not to define the boundaries of the parishes, but only to grant protection to the church lands and to safeguard the right of common.

²⁵ The Polish rulers were obliged to flee to Germany on numerous occasions (Cf. *Archiv*, Vol. VIII, p 6 ff).

princesses.²⁶ Of these the most notable was St. Hedwig²⁷ of Andechs-Merania (born about 1174 at the castle of Andechs on the Ammersee in Bavaria, and canonized on March 26th, 1267). She was the daughter of one of the most powerful German princes, Count Berthold IV of Andechs-Merania (Merania = the country by the sea, Dalmatia; the territory belonging to this family extended as far as Istria), and was educated at the Benedictine convent in Kitzingen on the Main. She was the eighth German woman to marry a member of the Piast house, and when, at the age of twelve, she became the wife of the young son of a Silesian duke she dutifully followed him to the distant country in the east, where, after her husband succeeded to the throne on the death of his father in 1201, she became the first lady of the land, far-famed for her wisdom, self-sacrifice, and infinite kindness to the poor and oppressed. She used her dowry to found the first convent in Silesia, namely at Trebnitz, and to this convent she appointed nuns from Bamberg, who belonged to the Cistercian order. In 1219 the choir of the convent church at Trebnitz, one of the oldest buildings in Silesia which has been preserved, was consecrated. The central nave and the two side-aisles were built in the early Gothic style, but certain alterations were made in the interior during the baroque era.²⁸ Here, too, is the grave of St. Hedwig who died in Trebnitz on October 15, 1243, two years after she had sacrificed her son, Heinrich II (ruled 1238-1241), for the salvation of Silesia and the whole of Germany in the battle against the Tartars at Liegnitz (1241).

From 1163 onwards Silesia began to detach itself from the Polish state, and German resettlement²⁹ was encouraged and furthered, so that by about 1300 the country once more manifested German characteristics. During the years in which they lived in Germany

²⁶ Vladislav II (ruled 1138-1146, died 1159), the progenitor of the Piast house in Silesia, married Agnes, the daughter of Duke Leopold of Austria. By this alliance he became the brother-in-law of the German King, Konrad III. His second wife was a daughter of Margrave Albrecht the Bear. Vladislav's son, Boleslaus I (died 1201), who, together with his brothers, Mesko and Konrad, spent seventeen years in Germany (1146-1163) likewise chose a German woman as his second wife, namely Adelheid, the daughter of Berengar of Sulzbach in the Upper Palatinate. She lies buried in Pforta.

²⁷ Hermann Hoffmann, *Die Heilige Hedwig*. Meitingen, 1949.

²⁸ Zinkler-Frey-Grundmann, *Die Klosterkirche in Trebnitz*. W. G. Korn, Breslau, 1940.

²⁹ Resettlement occurred sporadically during the second half of the twelfth century (Cf. *Archiv*, Vol. IX, p. 14). Information regarding German settlement is contained in the following works: *Urkundensammlung zur Geschichte des Ursprungs der Staedte und der Einfuehrung und Verbreitung deutscher Kolonisten und Rechte*. Edited by Tzschoppe and Stenzel, Hamburg, 1832. — *Codex diplomaticus Silesiae* 36 Vols Edited by Grünhagen, Wutke and Randt. 1857-1933.

(Altenburg in Saxony) the Silesian Piasts had had an opportunity of studying the colonization system which Margrave Albrecht the Bear of Brandenburg (died 1170), Heinrich the Lion, Duke of Saxony, and Count Adolf II of Schaumburg had developed on a large scale during this period. It is therefore not surprising that the longing for German culture became all-powerful in the east. The dukes of Silesia, the big landowners, the nobility, the bishops, and the monasteries all invited German settlers to make their home in Silesia, and from the end of the twelfth until the middle of the fourteenth century there was a steady influx of Frankish, Thuringian, Bavarian and other German settlers from various parts of the German Empire into the territory in the east. And they acquired this territory not with the sword but with the hoe and the plough.³⁰

It is interesting to note that the Piasts, even before their exile, had invited settlers from the German Empire and other parts of the Western world to Silesia. During the time of Bishop Walter Walloons from the territory we now call Belgium settled in the swampy districts near Breslau, that is in the region near the mouth of the River Ohle (in the area which later became the parish of St. Mauritius in Breslau) and also at Wallendorf (called Wallonendorf in the thirteenth century) in the district of Namslau. These settlers, incidentally, applied the valuable experience they had gained in their own country to the task of draining these swampy regions. Upon his return to Silesia Duke Boleslaus undertook the task of clearing large forest areas. This work was at first carried out by the native inhabitants and later by German settlers. An account of this activity is given in the foundation-book of the monastery at Heinrichau.³¹

When the return of the sons of Vladislav II to Silesia was made possible in 1163 by Emperor Frederick Barbarossa they sought the support of the German clergy as a safety measure. In the same year the monastery at Leubus³² which had been founded in 1150 was consigned to Cistercian monks from Pforta in Saxony, and in 1175, after the entire order had been established there, a formal deed of

³⁰ Cf F. X. Seppelt, "Die deutsche Besiedlung Schlesiens und die Kirche. Foerderung und Hemmungen" in *Deutsche Hefte fuer Volks- und Kulturbodenforschung*, pp 20-29, Vol I, 1930. — See also R Koebner, "Locatio Zur Begriffssprache und Geschichte der deutschen Kolonisation" in *Zeitschrift des Vereins fuer Geschichte Schlesiens*, pp 1-32, Vol 63, 1929

³¹ *Liber fundationis claustrae Sanctae Mariae Virginis in Heinrichow*. Edited by Stenzel, Breslau, 1854 The German translation by Bretschneider is contained in *Darstellungen und Quellen zur schlesischen Geschichte*, Vol. 29, 1927. The book describes the laws of the times and the settlement of the Germans on monastic lands

³² *Monumenta Lubensia*, p 14 ff. Edited by Wilhelm Wattenbach, Breslau, 1851.

foundation³³ was drawn up which took into account the change in the legal rights of the members of the monastery that had ensued as a result of the German settlement of Silesia. The monastery of St. Vincent on the Elbing near Breslau, which had so far been inhabited by Polish Benedictines, was consigned to Premonstratensians from the monastery of St. Laurence at Kalisch which had been founded by monks from Laon.³⁴ The Augustinian prebendary order in Gorkau near the Zobten Mountain, which had originally come to Silesia from Arrouaise in Flanders, later transferred its abbey to St. Maria auf dem Sande in Breslau. Thus, the monasteries contributed to a great extent to the German resettlement of Silesia.

The most active monastic order in this respect was that of the Cistercians (Leubus³⁵, Heinrichau, Kamenz³⁶, Gruessau³⁷; and Rauden [1258] and Himmelwitz [1280] in Upper Silesia). All these monasteries, the earliest members of which came for the most part from German monasteries, remained in constant contact with their native country. In the course of time they were naturally obliged to recruit their members from the Silesian population who in this way came into contact with German monasteries and with the German element in general.

One of the most important prerequisites as regards the German settlement in the east, which was effected during a period extending from the last thirty years of the twelfth century to the middle of the fourteenth century, was Germanic law³⁸ which was soon recognized

³³ Silesian Chronological List of Historical Documents, No 46 The deed of foundation of the monastery at Leubus in 1175, which was first verified as genuine by Prof Dr Gorka, a Pole, is the oldest proof we have of the project to invite Germans to settle in Silesia In this deed the Duke gives the solemn pledge and assurance that "all Germans who settle on monastic lands shall without exception be exempted from all Polish laws" (*Quicumque theutonici coluerint vel habitaverint per abbatem collocati*)

³⁴ Cf *Archiv*, Vol. IX, p. 6 The Premonstratensian Order was founded by a German, Norbert of Xanten He became Archbishop of Magdeburg, and died in 1134

³⁵ Cf Kaps, *Heilige Heimat*, p 26 ff Brentano Verlag, Stuttgart, 1949

³⁶ *Ibid*, p 31 ff See also Silesian Chronological List of Historical Documents, Nos 351 and 1046.

³⁷ *Gruessauer Gedenkbuch*, p. 7 ff. Brentano Verlag, Stuttgart, 1949.

³⁸ The legal rights of the German settlers in Silesia were usually interpreted according to Saxon law It is no mere coincidence that the first translation of the *Sachsenspiegel* from Low German into Latin was undertaken in the thirteenth century at the instigation of Thomas II, Bishop of Breslau, as he wished to introduce Saxon law in the diocesan territory Occasionally Frankish or Flemish law was also applied instead of Saxon law Cf in this respect Silesian Chronological List of Historical Documents, No 987. See also R Koebner, "Deutsches Recht und deutsche Kolonisation in den Piastenlaendern" in *Zeitschrift fuer Sozial und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, pp 313-352, Vol 25, 1932.

as valid in addition to Slavonic law³⁹ and finally predominated. Based on the example set by Neumarkt in Silesia, Germanic law gradually made itself felt in the territories beyond the borders of Silesia, namely in Greater and Lesser Poland.⁴⁰

All the larger villages in which Germanic law held good were allowed to build their own parish-churches and were granted one or two and sometimes more hides (1 hide = 15 hectares) of parish-land. The number of churches thus increased rapidly during the time of the German settlement of the country. Whereas the charter of possession granted to the diocese of Breslau by Pope Adrian IV in 1155⁴¹ indicates that, apart from the bishop's church and three monasteries, the only churches in existence at that time were those in the largest villages of the castle domains, the lists of the papal mandatories which were used for the purpose of collecting crusade tithes and Peter's pence⁴² show that at the beginning of the fourteenth century there were hundreds of parish-churches all over the country as a result of the German settlement. As a rule parish-schools were soon established in the German parishes, in particular during the thirteenth century. The extent to which the educational level of the population of the country was influenced by the setting up of hundreds of parish-churches and schools can easily be estimated.

Thanks to the efforts of the bishops of Breslau the ancient diocese of Neisse and Ottmachau (the present Upper Silesian districts of

³⁹ According to Slavonic law imposts and taxes had to be paid for land. A tithe of the harvest had to be handed over to each of the persons entitled to receive it, as for instance the land-owner, the church, and sometimes to other authorized persons, too. The bigger the harvest the more the taxes increased, so that the persons who benefited from an improved cultivation of the land were not the farmers, but those who were entitled to receive the tithes. For this reason the Slavonic farmers were usually very negligent in their farming methods. In addition, they also had to render various personal services, such as statute-labour, sentry-duty, etc. Cf. a charter pertaining to Polsnitz, granted to the monastery of St Vincent in Breslau by Duke Heinrich I in 1228, Silesian Chronological List of Historical Documents, No 325. Cf. also Silesian Chronological List of Historical Documents, No. 315.

⁴⁰ As for example, Borzykovo, 1272; cod. dipl. maj. Pol. 1, No 448. Very soon Slavonic villages came under Germanic law, since this was more advantageous. Cf. Tzschoppe-Stenzel, Collection of Historical Documents, No 27. Hamburg, 1832. — On the subject of Germanic law and its influence in Poland see H. Aubin, *Schlesien, ein Ausfallstor deutscher Kultur nach dem Osten im Mittelalter*. 1937.

⁴¹ In the charter itself neither the cathedral nor the monasteries are listed. With the exception of the abbatis Martini no churches are mentioned. Cf. *Archiv*, Vol. IX, p. 3 ff.

⁴² The original lists are preserved in the Vatican archives. Reprinted in Ptasnick, *Mon. Pol. Vaticana*, Cracow, 1914; in particular the lists of Archpresbyter Gabriel of Rimini for the years 1318-1324 and of Galhardus de carceribus for 1335.

Neisse and Grottkau⁴³) became so Germanized⁴⁴ that it was not included in the plebiscite territory in 1921, but, like Central and Lower Silesia, was regarded as undoubtedly being German territory.

As far as the rest of Silesia is concerned, here, too, we have proof that it was settled by Germans in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.⁴⁵ Settlement of the territory of Upper Silesia centred round twenty castles and towns, which, having been granted German rights and having absorbed German settlers, became truly German towns. They are as follows: four towns on the Oder (Oppeln, Krappitz, Cosel, Ratibor), four towns west of the Oder (Falkenberg, Steinau, Zuelz, Oberglogau), and twelve towns east of the Oder (Rosenberg, Lublinitz, Gross-Strehlitz, Tost, Peiskretscham, Beuthen, Ujest [Bischhofsthal], Gleiwitz, Sohrau, Rybnik, Loslau, and Teschen). Settlement, in particular in the church-lands of Neisse, Ottmachau, and Grottkau, and in the district of Ujest, was promoted to a very considerable extent by the bishops of Breslau, Lorenz (1207-1222), Thomas I (1232-1268), and Thomas II (1270-1292). The influence of these German towns made itself felt, and Upper Silesia was re-organized anew according to the fundamental principles of Germanic law.⁴⁶ Detailed information on German settlement activity in the Leobschuetz district is likewise available; during the period of

⁴³ Bishop Preczlaus of Pogarell acquired the Duchy of Grottkau in the year 1344. Until then it had belonged to the Duchy of Brieg.

⁴⁴ Cf. Acta Thomae of Bishop Thomas II of Breslau. Reprinted for the most part in Stenzel, *Urkunden zur Geschichte des Bistums Breslau im Mittelalter*. Breslau, 1842. See also Jos Pfitzner, *Besiedlungs-, Verfassungs- und Verwaltungsgeschichte des Breslauer Bistumslandes* 1926.

⁴⁵ One of the most outstanding scholars of Silesian history, the Franciscan priest, Lambert Schulte (died April 9, 1919), in his essay, "Die Rechnung ueber den Peterspfennig von 1447, Studien ueber die deutsche Besiedlung und die Parochialverfassung Oberschlesiens" (in *Darstellungen und Quellen zur schlesischen Geschichte*, Vol. 23 Breslau, 1918) aptly says that the mediaeval parochial constitution of the archidiaconate of Oppeln (i. e. of the heart of Upper Silesia), municipal affairs, and the entire culture of Upper Silesia are based on German legal principles. In 1447, for example, the number of parishes in the archidiaconate of Oppeln to which parish-land had been granted (i. e. parishes founded according to Germanic law) amounted to 222.

⁴⁶ "Deutsches Recht in Oberschlesien im Mittelalter", a list of towns and villages, compiled by Dr. K. Wutke and published in *Aus Oberschles. Vergangenheit, Beitrage zur schlesischen Geschichte*, p. 13 ff. Edited by Verein fuer Geschichte Schlesiens Gleiwitz, 1921. The list contains the names of 213 places which possessed a church and had been founded during the 13th and 14th centuries according to Germanic law. Actually they numbered many more. — Cf. also *Zwei Jahrtausende Oberschlesiens*, comprising eight maps. Edited by Wilh. Volz, Breslau, 1920.

settlement which lasted for about 150 years (1200-1350) 83 German towns and villages were founded in the Leobschuetz and Troppau district by German settlers.⁴⁷

This huge task of settling Silesia was on the whole concluded by about the middle of the fourteenth century. From 1163 to 1350 63 towns⁴⁸ and about 1,500 villages were settled in Silesia, in particular in the large forest region which in former times formed the border between Silesia and Bohemia.⁴⁹

In conclusion, it must be stressed that the German settlers came into the country at the invitation of the rulers, the dukes, bishops, monasteries, and other land-owners. Many of these were Slavs, but they nevertheless appreciated the great cultural and economic improvements which the German settlers brought to the country. Apart from the fact that in the Middle Ages, and particularly in the era during which this German settlement of Silesia was effected (from 1163-1350), national differences were not in evidence as much as they are in our times, there is also sufficient proof available that the German settlement activity was not in any way intended as a means of exterminating the Slavonic race.⁵⁰ On the contrary, the latter was, in the greater part of Silesia, absorbed quite naturally by the German element in much the same way as the influx of immigrants from all over Europe into America is, even in our day, assimilated and absorbed into the Anglo-Saxon element without any drastic or violent measures being applied.

⁴⁷ *Leobschuetzer Heimatbuch*, p 12 ff Edited by Jos Klink, Munich, 1950

⁴⁸ The constitution and laws of the towns, as in the case of the villages, were based on the example set by the German Empire, in particular by the towns of Halle and Magdeburg. The most outstanding example of municipal planning and administration in Silesia is the capital, Breslau Cf R Konwiarz, *Alt-Schlesien*, p. 11, and also *Beitraege zur Schles. Landeskunde*, pp 1-27 Edited by M Friedrichsen 1925 The municipal by-laws of Breslau were later adopted by other towns, some of them beyond the borders of Silesia, as for example by Cracow in 1257

⁴⁹ Cf. additional pamphlet to atlas, *Schlesien*, pp 38-39. Goettingen, 1946.

⁵⁰ W. Jungandreas, *Beitraege zur Erforschung der Bestiedlung Schlesiens und zur Entwicklungsgeschichte der schles. Mundart*. 1928. The most comprehensive list of works dealing with the history of German settlement in Silesia is contained in H. Schlenger, "Deutsches Schrifttum zur Landeskunde der Gebiete ostwaerts von Oder und Neisse (1930-1951)", published in *Geographische Rundschau*, 4th annual series, No. 1 (Jan 1952), pp. 29-35. Westermann, Brunswick.

4) Poland's Cession of Silesia

Silesia under the Bohemian kings (1327-1526) and under the Hapsburgs (1526-1742)

On August 24th, 1335, King John of Bohemia, who had acquired practically all the Silesian duchies, concluded the Treaty of Trentschin⁵¹ with King Casimir of Poland. This treaty stipulated that Silesia was to be severed from Poland for all time, that is to say by voluntary cession on the part of Poland and not by war or any other drastic measures.⁵² King John of Bohemia, on the other hand, renounced all claims on his part and on the part of his heirs arising out of the Polish kingdom of Wenceslaus II of Bohemia and all claims to the title of King of Poland.

The union of Silesia and Bohemia had been furthered by the Silesian dukes. Thus, the Treaty of Trentschin in 1335 merely confirmed constitutional developments so far⁵³, and in view of the German resettlement of Silesia the act of cession on the part of Poland was solely of formal significance and could therefore be effected unconditionally.

On February 9th, 1339, King Casimir the Great of Poland most solemnly confirmed the cession of Cracow which had been declared by his mandatories.⁵⁴ In these deeds of cession no mention was made of the diocese of Breslau, but soon afterwards Bishop Preczlaus of

⁵¹ *Lehns- und Besitzurkunden Schlesiens*, Pt I (1881), p 3 ff.

⁵² This act of cession was merely an outward and legal form of confirming a state of affairs which had already existed for a long time. On January 10th, 1289, Duke Casimir had been invested with the fief of his Duchy of Beuthen in Upper Silesia and had voluntarily taken the oath of allegiance to King Wenceslaus in Prague. On February 18th and 19th, 1327, Duke Boleslaus I of Oppeln, Duke Casimir I of Teschen, and Duke Vladislaus of Cosel had taken the oath of allegiance as lieges of the young king of Bohemia, John. A few days later Duke Lesko of Ratibor and Duke Johann of Auschwitz took the oath of allegiance to the King of Bohemia at Beuthen. It is interesting to note that the dukes of Upper Silesia were the first to swear allegiance to a prince of the German Empire, namely John of Bohemia, with the consent of their provincial diets. Their example was followed in March, 1327, by Heinrich VI of Breslau-Liegnitz and by the dukes of Oels and Glogau in 1329. Cf Aubin, *loc. cit.*, Vol I, p 162 ff.

⁵³ Seppelt, p 32 ff.

⁵⁴ *Lehns- und Besitzurkunden Schlesiens*, Pt. I (1881), p 44 ff. — The original charter, bearing the King's seal, which as regards the extent and significance of the act of cession merely corroborates what has been said about the treaty and charter of 1335, is preserved in the State Archives in Prague. It contains the following words: "Libenti animo recognoscimus, dicimus et publice protestamur, nos in magnis principibus (a list of the Silesian dukes and the towns of Breslau and Glogau) cum districtibus, limitibus, affectibus et pertinentiis earum universis nullum ius, proprietatem vel dominium, possessionem ac titulum habere et habuisse, competere aut competisse." This document gives the Polish act of cession a truly religious significance.

Pogarell (1342-1376) acknowledged the King of Bohemia as the patron of the diocese of Breslau. Furthermore, the State Decree issued for the principality of Breslau, the Ratibor Settlement Act of January 1337, and the orders issued to all the Silesian princes pertaining to shipping on the Oder, customs-duty, and public security⁵⁵ mention King John of Bohemia as the appointed ruler of the whole of Silesia who since 1344 is rightfully entitled to call himself "supremus princeps Slezianorum" and also refer to the head of the municipal government of Breslau, who had held office since 1335, as the governor of his provinces in the whole of Silesia.

King John's son, King Karl IV, king of Germany and Bohemia, was thus justified in describing Silesia as part of the kingdom of Bohemia. On April 7th, 1348, he founded the first German university in Prague, where from this date onwards many Silesians taught and studied. On the same day he also signed the charter incorporating Silesia into the kingdom of Bohemia. On April 5th, 1355, he was crowned Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire of German nations in Rome in the presence of his wife, Anna of Schweidnitz, and several Silesian princes, and, as Emperor, he renewed the charter of incorporation on October 9th, 1355. When the new Imperial Basic Law, the Golden Bull of 1356, was drawn up, all the German electors by their written consent, the "Willebriefe", of 1355 declared Silesia part of the kingdom of Bohemia and thus an inseparable part of the German Empire.

The charters of cession of 1335 and 1339 were ratified on May 23rd, 1372, by King Ludwig of Hungary and Poland in Wysegrad in Hungary, whereby he solemnly swore by the Holy Cross and the Holy Gospel that he, and also his wife, Elisabeth, would renounce all claims to the following principalities belonging to the German Empire and the kingdom of Bohemia: Breslau, Schweidnitz, Jauer, Muensterberg, Liegnitz, Brieg, Oels, Glogau, Crossen, Sagan, Oppeln, Falkenberg, Gross-Strehlitz, Teschen, Ratibor, Troppau, Kosel, Beuthen, Auschwitz, Steinau, and Guhrau, that is to say, the whole of Silesia, including Upper Silesia.⁵⁶

The alliance of Silesia and the kingdom of Bohemia lasted about two centuries. During this period Silesia benefited considerably from the many improvements which the rule of the House of Luxemburg, in particular the reign of King John and his son, Karl IV, brought to the territory of Bohemia. There were many Silesian professors and students at the University of Prague (founded in 1348). In addition,

⁵⁵ Aubin, *loc. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 163.

⁵⁶ Cf Silesian Chronological List of Historical Documents, No. 342.

the daughter of a Silesian duke, Anna of Schweidnitz, was the wife of the Emperor Karl (1353-1362). During the Hussite Wars (1425 to 1434) Silesia, which fought to preserve the German character of the country, endured a long period of suffering and hardship. About forty Silesian towns were razed to the ground by the Hussites.

From 1526 onwards Bohemia and thus Silesia, too, formed part of the vast Hapsburg Empire. Silesia, Bohemia, and Austria united to form an important cultural sphere, a fact of which there is evidence in the baroque style of the buildings of many Silesian towns and of countless village churches.

5) *Silesia under Prussian Rule (from 1740 onwards)*⁵⁷

The problem of Upper Silesia

In the course of the two Silesian Wars and the Seven Years' War (the Peace of Hubertusburg 1763) King Frederick II of Prussia succeeded in conquering the whole of Silesia, with the exception of part of the mountainous district of the country which remained an Austrian possession.

The most decisive event as far as the diocese of Breslau was concerned during the period in which Silesia was under Prussian rule was the Edict of Secularization of October 13th, 1810, which decreed that in future all monasteries, cathedrals, and other ecclesiastically endowed institutions, benefices, and prebends were to be regarded as state property. Soon afterwards the Prussian state confiscated 67 monasteries and convents in Silesia.⁵⁸

By decree of the Papal Bull, "De salute animarum", of July 16th, 1821, the diocese of Breslau was defined anew, and was placed under the direct administration of the Holy See, thus rendering it exempt and also severing it from the ecclesiastical province of Gnesen. The area of the diocese for the most part remained the same and it also retained the Austrian territory which belonged to it. The archpresbyterates of Beuthen and Pless, belonging to the diocese of Cracow, that is to say, the Upper Silesian industrial area, and also Neuzelle and the parishes in Lusatia (formerly administered by the collegiate chapter in Bautzen) were added to it. In addition, the so-

⁵⁷ It is not possible to give further details here on the history of the diocese of Breslau. The following works, however, are to be recommended on this subject: Seppelt, "Geschichte des Bistums Breslau", *loc cit*; Kaps, *Aus der Geschichte des Erzbistums Breslau* Munich, 1948

⁵⁸ Cf. Jungnitz, *Die Breslauer Weihbischoefe* Breslau, 1934. The best account of the secularization is contained in Otto Linke, "Friedrich Th. von Merckel im Dienste fuers Vaterland", Pt II, up to January 1813, in *Darstellungen und Quellen zur schles Geschichte*, Vol 10 (1910). According to official records the secularized estates in Silesia yielded a net revenue of 539,940 thaler (which was equal to 1½ million gold Marks purchasing power in those days!) annually

called delegacy, namely the present diocese of Berlin, was also assigned to the diocese of Breslau. This district comprised Berlin, Pomerania, and most of the province of Brandenburg which at that time consisted of only six parishes (Berlin, Potsdam, Spandau, Frankfurt on the Oder, Stettin, and Stralsund) numbering about 12,000 souls, and had so far been administered by the apostolic vicariate of the Nordic missions. The provost of St. Hedwig's Church in Berlin, built during the reign of Frederick the Great, was to be in charge of this district as the delegate of the bishop of Breslau.

In the course of the next hundred years, thanks to the active efforts of the prince-bishops of Breslau and the Silesian clergy, the original six parishes increased to sixty parishes and curacies. Cardinal Bertram paved the way for the promotion of the delegacy to the status of a diocese, inasmuch as it was thanks to his efforts that the Berlin delegate of the diocese of Breslau was advanced to the rank of a suffragan bishop in 1923, his powers of authority increased, and a body of advisers elected to assist him. On the strength of the Concordat⁵⁹ between the Holy See and the Free State of Prussia, of June 14th, 1929, which was ratified on August 13th, 1929, Pope Pius XI, by the Papal Constitution "Pastoralis officii", on August 13th, 1930, founded the diocese of Berlin. In 1929 this diocese covered an area of about 23,000 square miles and included 540,000 Catholics and 78 parishes founded according to canon law, as well as 76 curacies and other benefices. The number of pastors amounted to 248. The ecclesiastical development which had extended over a period of a hundred years was thus brought to a successful conclusion. Thanks to the sacrifice and activity of the prince-bishops of Breslau and of the Silesian clergy and people, all efforts to further the ecclesiastical development of the widely scattered districts of Brandenburg and Pomerania materialized.

After World War I Upper Silesia was partitioned and, as a result, the diocese of Breslau was also divided into parts. The political changes of the times gave rise to problems which so far had never been seriously considered. Of these the most pressing was the question as to whether Upper Silesia should remain part of the German Empire or be assigned to Poland.⁶⁰ With the exception of a few

⁵⁹ Cf. Dr. Josef Wenner, *Reichskonkordat und Laenderkonkordate* (5th. edit.), p. 57 ff. Ferd. Schoeningh, Paderborn, 1949

⁶⁰ A Polish problem did not arise in Silesia until about the middle of the 19th century when Poles from Poznan settled in Silesia and began to manifest a lively propagandist activity, which was fostered by Bismarck's unfortunate cultural opposition to the Catholic church. Cf. in this connection Georg Baron Manteuffel-Szoegge, *Geschichte des polnischen Volkes waehrend seiner Unfreiheit 1772-1914*, p. 168 ff., pp. 240-241. Duncker and Humblot, Berlin.

Polish nationalists no one had ever seriously thought that Upper Silesia might some day be separated from Germany. Even Archbishop von Stablevski of Poznan-Gnesen, himself a patriotic Pole who believed that Poland would rise to power and undoubtedly laid claim to as much territory as possible for the new Poland he hoped for, said, "The legal and political status of the Poles in the province of Poznan differs from that of the Silesians. Silesia has in fact been legally severed from the leading Polish monarchy for more than seven hundred years and cannot, as far as the ideology of a Greater Poland is concerned, be regarded by the Poles here as a political sphere of activity. We are, moreover, entirely opposed to the idea of any kind of political propaganda whatsoever regarding Silesia emanating from our midst."⁶¹

That this opinion was still prevalent in Poland even after World War I can be seen from the attitude of the Polish President, Pilsudski, towards Polish insurgents in Upper Silesia. When the first Polish insurrection occurred in Upper Silesia⁶² in August 1919 certain representatives of the Insurgents' Organization went to Warsaw in order to obtain the support of the Polish Government in the form of arms and soldiers. Pilsudski informed them that he could in no way assist them as he was allied with Germany by treaties. In the course of the discussion which took place he clearly expressed his opinion on this matter when he said, "So you want Upper Silesia, do you? That's impossible. Upper Silesia is an ancient German colony." With this remark Pilsudski was hinting at the fact that Upper Silesia had not belonged to Poland prior to the partition of Poland and that the Poles usually based their territorial claims on the "restoration of the frontiers of 1772".⁶³ Indeed, prior to the Treaty of Versailles

⁶¹ Cf *Kurjer Poznański*, No 229 of the year 1892

⁶² Fr W von Oertzen, *Das ist Polen*, p. 60 Munich

⁶³ Cf K Schodrok, *Das Erlebnis der oberschlesischen Volksabstimmung*, p. 9 ff. Neumarkt/Opf., 1951. — At that time the coal supplies of Upper Silesia amounted to 40 per cent of the German supplies (i.e. almost as much as the entire supplies of Great Britain) and its annual production amounted to about one-fourth of the total production of Germany. Zinc production in Upper Silesia amounted to four-fifths of Germany's zinc production and to one-sixth of the zinc production in all the countries of the world. Lead production in Upper Silesia amounted to 48 per cent of Germany's lead production. Poland received 22 zinc-works and 11 zinc and lead mines with an annual production of 227,000 tons of zinc. Fifteen of 25 steel and iron foundries with an annual production of 406,000 tons of pig-iron were assigned to Poland. In addition, Germany lost 23 of its 37 blast-furnaces, 53 of its 67 coalmines, and also the district which contained 95 per cent of the unexploited coal supplies of Upper Silesia. Germany was obliged to cede 9 of its 14 rolling-mills and also 12 iron-ore mines to Poland. The new demarcation line intersected 31 railway routes and 45 highways — Cf *Oberschlesien und der Genfer Schiedsspruch*. H Sack, Berlin, 1925.

Upper Silesia had in general been regarded as "German territory with respect to its history, its culture, and the character and sentiments of its population".⁶⁴ The foregoing remarks on the early and mediaeval history of Silesia also hold good for Upper Silesia.⁶⁵

The people of Upper Silesia remained truly German in their sentiments to the very end, — a fact which is proved by the plebiscite in Upper Silesia on March 20, 1921, which, despite all previous terrorist measures on the part of Korfanty and his insurgents, resulted in a majority for Germany of about two-thirds. Of the 1,213,164 persons entitled to vote, 707,554 (59.64 per cent) voted for Germany and only 478,802 (40.36 per cent) for Poland. Despite Germany's majority in this plebiscite the Geneva Decision of October 20, 1921, assigned two-fifths of the plebiscite territory including the towns of Katowice, Koenigshuette, Lublinitz, Pless, Rybnik, and Tarnowitz to Poland. As a result of this measure ecclesiastical conditions in the territory of Upper Silesia which had been ceded to Poland were also re-organized, and on October 28, 1925, the youngest Silesian bishopric of Katowice was founded by the Papal Bull "Vixdum Poloniae unitas". The diocese of Katowice comprised those parts of Upper Silesia and Austrian-Silesia which had been severed from the diocese of Breslau and was placed under the administration of the archdiocese of Cracow as a suffragan see. As a result of this severance⁶⁶ the archdiocese of Breslau lost about a million Catholics and about 180 parishes and benefices in a district which extended over an area of 1,240 square miles. In addition, a further 198 square miles of territory in Lower Silesia with a population of 26,248 had to be ceded to Poland without a plebiscite, and this territory now became part of the archdiocese of Poznan-Gnesen. The tiny state of Hultschin with an area of 122 square miles and a population of 48,466, which had always belonged to the archdiocese of Olmuetz, was likewise ceded to Czechoslovakia without a plebiscite. In 1920 the eastern part of the commissariat of Teschen (Olsa district) which belonged to the diocese

⁶⁴ See encyclopedia, *Oberschlesien*, p 7 ff Deutsche Verlags-AG, Berlin, 1925.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p 11.

⁶⁶ A leading Upper Silesian clergyman said in the German Parliament at that time, "... Legally, the decision is a violation of the law, politically it is an act of folly, and economically it is a crime. Time will never heal these wounds. They will continue to fester and smart until the sting of injustice is removed from them and these territories are restored to the country to which they belong." Cf. encyclopedia, *Oberschlesien*. Berlin, 1925. — Professor Schuster, the former American High Commissioner of Bavaria, in his book, *The Germans. An Inquiry and an Estimate* (New York, 1932), reproaches Polish imperialism after World War I with a highly immoral theft of territory belonging to Germany.

of Breslau had been assigned to Poland without a plebiscite, and in 1925 it was incorporated into the diocese of Katowice.⁶⁷

As compensation for the severance of the two dioceses of Katowice and Berlin the diocese of Breslau was raised to the status of an archdiocese by the Prussian Concordat, and thus became the centre of the ecclesiastical province of Eastern Germany to which the dioceses of Berlin and Ermland and the free prelacy of Schneidemuehl were subordinated as suffragan sees. As far as size was concerned the archdiocese of Breslau was still the largest, and as regards the number of Catholics it was the second largest diocese in Germany.

6) *The Position of the Silesian Church during the Third Reich (1933-1945)*

As was elsewhere the case in Germany, the Catholic Church in Silesia was persecuted to an ever-increasing degree by those in power in the Third Reich. The statements made by Dr. Johannes Neuhaeusler, the suffragan bishop of Munich, in his documentary work, *Kreuz und Hakenkreuz*⁶⁸, which deals with the conflict between National Socialism and the Catholic Church and the resistance offered by the latter, also hold good for Silesia. In 1941 sixty monasteries and monastic institutions in the diocese of Breslau were confiscated or partly expropriated. Many of the priests, monks, and lay brothers in the diocese of Breslau died as martyrs, whilst others were imprisoned in concentration camps.⁶⁹ From the outset Cardinal Dr. Bertram⁷⁰ made no attempt to conceal his opposition to the National Socialist ideology, and he clearly foresaw the consequences of National Socialism for Germany.⁷¹

Unfortunately the Cardinal's words of warning as regards fanatical nationalism and glorification of the German race went unheeded in some quarters, above all in various foreign countries, which by

⁶⁷ Cf Kaps, *Handbuch fuer das katholische Schlesien*. Komm. Verlag "Christ Unterwegs", Munich, 1951

⁶⁸ Munich, 1946

⁶⁹ Towards the end of the war, that is on March 15, 1945, there were seventeen priests from the archdiocese of Breslau in confinement at the concentration camp in Dachau.

⁷⁰ On the subject of the activity of the last two bishops of Breslau, Cardinal Georg Kopp, and Cardinal Adolf Bertram, cf Rudolf Jokiel, "Das Bistum Breslau funf Jahrzehnte Vorort der katholischen Kirche in Deutschland", in *950 Jahre Bistum Breslau*, edited by Prof. Dr E. Brzoska, p 90 ff Koenigsteiner Rufe, Koenigstein, 1951.

⁷¹ Pastoral message by Cardinal Bertram at the end of the year, 1930. Printed in *Archiv*, Vol VII, p 14 ff. and in *Germania*, of December 31, 1930.

their treaties with the persons in power in the Third Reich encouraged and emboldened the latter. Again and again Cardinal Bertram, as president of the Bishops' Congress at Fulda and as representative of the German Episcopate, in his excellent writings and by means of verbal petitions on the part of his mandatories, addressed to the highest authorities in the Third Reich, to the Reichs Security Headquarters in Berlin, the highest office of the Gestapo, protested most violently against the violation of man's natural rights by the Gestapo as perpetrated in the concentration camps, in the treatment of the Poles and Jews, and in the extermination of those who were classed as unfit to live, namely the insane and feeble-minded.

When all the Jews and half-Jews in Silesia who were married to Aryan Christians and had so far been "privileged" to live with their partners were arrested at the beginning of 1944, Cardinal Bertram immediately sent a written petition, and also a verbal petition through his mandatory, to the Gestapo Headquarters, in which he protested against the confinement of these Jews and half-Jews in the concentration camp at Theresienstadt.

Cardinal Bertram always had the welfare of those in his care at heart, even of those who were not Germans. For years he fought to get permission for Polish and other foreign civilian workers in Germany to attend divine services in their own language. The suffragan bishop of Breslau, Bishop Josef Ferche, was reprimanded repeatedly and threatened with confinement in a concentration camp by the Gestapo because he held services in Polish and Czech in those districts belonging to the archdiocese of Breslau in which these languages were spoken. Various clergymen of the diocese of Breslau were taken to Dachau or punished in some other way because they obeyed the orders of their bishop and held special services for Poles and other foreigners in the native language of these persons.

All those who know how hostile the attitude of the leading National Socialists was towards the Church will realize that it was not the fault of the Cardinal that all his efforts directed against the unjust measures of the Gestapo and the heads of the National Socialist regime did not have the desired effect. Future ages will, by reason of the documents available, appreciate the tireless efforts of Cardinal Bertram in his fight for justice and humanity in the spirit of Christianity.⁷²

⁷² See Kaps, *Erinnerungen an Adolf Kardinal Bertram Furstbischof von Breslau*, p 55 ff 1948.

SECTION II

Conditions in Silesia and the Archdiocese of Breslau at the beginning of 1945

During the second dreadful World War of 1939-1945 Silesia and the archdiocese of Breslau were so to speak the public air-raid shelter of Germany until about the beginning of 1945. Thousands of persons who had lost their homes and their possessions in the course of the air-raids in Western Germany found a refuge in Silesia, which as yet was untouched by the war and still had abundant agricultural supplies. The feeling of security enjoyed by the population of Silesia was only disturbed on one occasion, namely when Russian planes carried out a surprise air-raid on Breslau ⁷³ in the late autumn of 1944 when the Soviet armies were steadily approaching the eastern frontiers of Germany. In addition to the evacuees from the West who had come to Silesia, various Berlin administrative departments, as for instance the Foreign Office, the Ministry of Finance, and others, had been transferred to the health-resorts in the Silesian mountains, in particular in the Riesen Mountains. ⁷⁴ There was thus a considerable increase in the population of Breslau, the capital of Silesia. Due to the influx of persons from Berlin and Western Germany and to the transfer of numerous industrial plants from various districts in Germany to Silesia, the population of Breslau had increased from 626,000 to about 1 million. The population of Silesia as whole, which at the last census ⁷⁵ in 1939 had numbered 4,868,800 (i.e. 7 per cent of the population of Germany at that time) had also been increased very considerably by the hundreds of thousands of evacuees who had found a refuge here.

In order to gain an insight into the huge and dreadful catastrophe which occurred when word was passed round at the end of January 1945 that Breslau and Silesia were to be evacuated, it is necessary to consider conditions in general in Silesia and the archdiocese of Breslau at the beginning of 1945.

⁷³ The first heavy bomb fell in Breslau after the last evening service of the 7th centenary celebrations of Breslau Cathedral, which were held during the first week of October, 1944. It came down near the Oder, opposite the provost's residence, the windows of which, 200 in number, were shattered. (See also account in Kaps, *Der Domprobst von Breslau*, pp. 16-17. Miesbach, 1950.)

⁷⁴ Cf Friedrich Grieger, *Wie Breslau fiel*, p. 3. Metzingen/Wuerttemberg, 1948.

⁷⁵ *Statistik des Deutschen Reiches*, Vol 550, p. 8 ff.

1) *Distribution of population in Silesia and in the German territory east of the Oder and Neisse*

After World War I Germany was obliged to cede territory in the east which had an area of over 19,305 square miles and a population of 4.5 million inhabitants (the provinces of Poznan and West Prussia, and parts of Upper Silesia). About 800,000 Germans were ejected from this territory by the Poles during the first decade after World War I.⁷⁶ In that part of Upper Silesia which had been ceded to Poland 292,025 Germans voted for Germany and only 286,265 for Poland in the plebiscite of March 20, 1921. Many of them were more or less forced to leave the country later on.⁷⁷ In the following account of conditions in Silesia only the frontiers of 1937 will be taken into consideration.

A historical survey reveals that Silesia is a German country, and this fact becomes even more obvious when we consider the grouping of the population according to their mother-tongue. In this connection and by way of comparison the other German territories in the east, that is east of the Oder and Neisse, are listed below with the statistics arrived at in the census of June 16, 1925.⁷⁸

Territory	Area (sq. miles)	Inhabitants
East Prussia	14,286	2,256,349
Border-territory	2,971	332,485
East Pomerania	8,720	1,356,358
East Brandenburg	4,831	698,234
Lower Silesia (not including Goerlitz district)	9,359	2,908,659
Upper Silesia	3,745	1,379,408
Danzig	738	407,500
German territory in east (1925):	44,650	9,338,993

⁷⁶ Cf. Fr. W. von Oertzen, *Das ist Polen*, p 218 Georg Muller, Munich, 1932.

⁷⁷ Cf. Dr. jur. Peter Fischer, *Das Recht und der Schutz der polnischen Minderheit in Oberschlesien*, p 6 ff. Reimar Hobbing, Berlin, 1931. In that part of Upper Silesia which remained German territory 415,529 persons voted for Germany and 192,537 for Poland. In the entire plebiscite territory 707,554 persons voted for Germany and 478,802 for Poland.

⁷⁸ *Statistik des Deutschen Reiches*, Vol 401; "Die Bevölkerung des Deutschen Reiches nach den Ergebnissen der Volkszählung vom 16 6 1925", p. 44 ff. and p 412 ff. Reimar Hobbing, Berlin, 1930. — Cf also *Deutschland vor der Londoner Konferenz im November 1947*, a treatise compiled by Prof. DDr. Fr. Luetge, p. 1 ff

The following statistics were arrived at as regards the mother-tongue of these 9,338,993 inhabitants.

German	8,657,492
Polish	188,597
German and Polish	422,148
Masurian	41,939
German and Masurian	24,203
Lithuanian	2,708
German and Lithuanian	1,906

In the same census the following statistics were arrived at as regards the mother-tongue of the persons living in Upper Silesia.

German	822,277 = 59.62 %
Polish	155,069 = 11.24 %
(of this group 119,364 persons understood German)	
German and Polish	387,439 = 28.09 % ⁷⁹

It must however be stressed that by no means all the persons who stated in this census that some language other than German was their mother-tongue and still less those who were bilingual can be regarded as non-Germans. Many of them gave Polish as their mother-tongue simply because they spoke Polish or German and Polish at home, although they were actually German at heart. This fact was clearly proved by the results of the plebiscites held after World War I on the strength of the Treaty of Versailles.⁸⁰ They were as follows:

<u>Territory</u>	<u>German Votes</u>
East Prussia	97.9 %
Lower Silesia	97.6 %
Upper Silesia	59.4 %
(including East Upper Silesia ⁸¹ which in 1922 was assigned to Poland)	

In this connection it must be stressed that the plebiscite in Upper Silesia was carried out under considerable pressure on the part of chauvinist Polish elements. In the German Parliamentary elections in West Upper Silesia on July 14, 1930⁸², 92.28 per cent of the popu-

⁷⁹ Cf Fischer, *loc cit.*, p 8.

⁸⁰ Cf. *Ostpreussen*, p 44. Edited by the Goettingen research group, 1947. See also K. Schodrok, *Das Erlebnis der oberschlesischen Volksabstimmung*, *loc. cit.*, p. 20.

⁸¹ Cf. footnote 77, p 32.

⁸² *Die Wahlen zum Reichstag am 14. 9. 1930*. Reimar Hobbing, Berlin, 1932.

lation voted for German candidates. In these elections the national minorities put up their own candidates. The extent to which Polish pressure played a part in the plebiscite is evident if the number of votes received by the candidates of the national minorities in the separate elections is compared with the plebiscite results in 1919 and 1921.⁸³ In the German Parliamentary elections on September 14, 1930, the candidates of all the national minorities together only received 75,431 votes in the entire territory of the German Reich. These votes were distributed as follows: Polish Catholic National Party in East Prussia 4,180 votes⁸⁴, 1,105 votes in Pomerania, 595 votes in Lower Silesia, 36,866 votes in Upper Silesia, which proves that the number of Poles living in Eastern Germany was relatively small.

The German census of May 17, 1939, showed the distribution of the population in the German eastern territories at that time to be as follows⁸⁵:

Provinces or districts	Area in sq miles	Population	Density per sq mile
East Prussia (entire)	14,282	2,488,122	174
Soviet part	5,096	1,149,605	225
Polish part	9,186	1,338,517	146
East Pomerania	11,969	1,895,015	158
East Brandenburg	4,362	594,041	136
Upper Silesia	3,741	1,529,258	409
Lower Silesia (east of the Neisse)	9,592	3,029,137	316
East Zittau	53	23,941	452
German eastern territories			
Polish part	38,915	8,409,909	217
Soviet part	5,096	1,149,605	225
German eastern territories (together)	44,011	9,559,514	217

⁸³ Whereas in 1925 11.24 per cent of the entire population of Upper Silesia gave Polish as their mother-tongue, only 7.8 per cent voted for the Polish candidates in the Reichs and Landtag elections on December 7, 1924, which preceded the census in 1925. At the Parliamentary elections on September 14, 1930, this number dropped to 5.53 per cent. This proves that the Polish language as mother-tongue was not the deciding factor as to whether someone belonged to the Polish minority or not. For this reason it is impossible to give absolutely reliable statistics as regards the number of Upper Silesians who belonged to the Polish minority. Cf. Fischer, *loc. cit.*, p. 8.

⁸⁴ *Die Wahlen zum Reichstag am 14. 9. 1930*, *loc. cit.*, Pt. II, p. 7 ff.

⁸⁵ Not including the Memel district and Danzig. The population of Memel on January 1, 1940, numbered 154,694, that of the Free City of Danzig at the end of 1939 numbered 390,593. Cf. *Statistik des Deutschen Reiches*, Vol. 550, p. 8 ff.

The German eastern territories beyond the Soviet Zone thus comprise one-fourth of the total area of the German Reich according to the frontiers of 1937 (= 181,677 sq.miles) and about one-seventh of its total population (= 69.3 million). The area of the German eastern territories corresponds to the total areas of Denmark, the Netherlands, and Switzerland, that is to say to four-fifths of the area of England (without Scotland).⁸⁶

The average density of the population in Silesia per square mile was 334, which was not much below the average in the German Reich (360). The extent of urbanization in Silesia was not particularly large. According to the census of May 17, 1939, 2,007,500 persons (= 41 per cent) lived in communities with a population of up to 2,000 inhabitants, and 2,861,300 persons (= 59 per cent) lived in communities with a population of over 2,000 inhabitants. Silesia occupies a special position among the countries of the German eastern territories.⁸⁷ As regards area it comprises less than one-third of the German eastern territories (14,019 sq.miles of 44,011 sq.miles), but numbers half the population (in 1939: 4,869,000 of 9,601,000). Whereas the other German territories east of the Oder and the Neisse are predominantly agricultural, Silesia, in addition to a highly developed agriculture, also possesses valuable mineral resources and important industries. Despite the density of its population it was in a position to supply not only its own population but also that of the rest of Germany with considerable quantities of foodstuffs and also with wood, coal, metal, and other industrial products.

2) Agriculture⁸⁸ in Silesia

Average Production in Silesia 1934-1938
(after deducting crop-seed, waste, and fodder)

Tons	Product
1,068,000	bread-stuffs
339,000	sugar
1,735,000	potatoes

⁸⁶ *Die deutschen Ostgebiete jenseits der Oder-Neisse Linie*, pp 3-4, publication of the Deutsches Buero fuer Friedensfragen II/2676/48, Stuttgart, 1948

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, p 6 ff., for details on the increase of population in Silesia and the other German eastern territories

⁸⁸ For details on forestry in Silesia see Prof. Dr Geisler, *Ackerbau, Viehzucht, Forstwirtschaft in Schlesien* (Silesian Atlas) maps 14a and 14b and appendix, p 29 ff. Hannover, 1946. According to this data 3,907 square miles of the total area of 14,023 square miles, that is to say 28 per cent, are forested (average percentage of forested area in Germany = 27)

Tons	Product
267,000	meat
150,000	farinaceous foods
67,000	butter
45,000	bacon and oil
576,000	skimmed milk
425,000	vegetables
143,000	fruit
15,000	cheese made of skimmed milk
30,000	cream cheese
19,000	eggs

Amount which suffices for one year if daily ration = 2860 calories (in lbs)		Number of persons (in millions)
Bread	308	7.6
Sugar	44.4	16.8
Potatoes	481.8	7.9
Meat	58.5	10.0
Farinaceous foods	58.5	5.6
Butter	28.8	5.1
Bacon	8.1	12.2
Skimmed milk	114.8	11.0
Vegetables	157.6	5.8
Fruit	88.4	3.6
Cheese (of skimmed milk)	3.9	8.3
Cream cheese	8.1	8.1
Eggs	4.8	8.6 ⁸⁹

Taking the food allocation for the 90th ration-period (June-July, 1946) in the British Zone as a basis, the above-mentioned production would be sufficient to supply 16.2 million persons with bread, 35.7 million persons with sugar, 31.7 million persons with potatoes, and 48.5 million persons with meat.

⁸⁹ Cf. Prof. Dr. Geisler, *Wirtschafts- u. verkehrsgeograph. Atlas von Schlesien*. Verlag Marcus, Breslau, 1932 — See also Prof. Dr. Geisler, *Ackerbau, Viehzucht, Forstwirtschaft in Schlesien*, loc cit, map 1a.

The following table shows the number of persons who could be adequately supplied with agricultural products from the German eastern territories as well as the amount of supplies available.

Products	Available Supplies (1,000 tons)	Number of Persons Supplied (Millions)	Number of Persons Supplied from Silesian Production (Millions)
bread-stuffs			
incl. farinaceous foods	2,325	14	7.3
potatoes	2,890	13.2	5.9
sugar	439	21.7	16.8
meat	579	21.8	10
fats	248	14.7	6.7
cheese	68	12.4	8.2
eggs	71	32.1	8.6

With the foodstuffs produced in Silesia alone, 7.1 million persons could thus on an average be adequately supplied (with 2,860 calories per day), whilst with the foodstuffs produced in the entire German eastern territories twice this number could be supplied, that is to say more than one and a half times the population domiciled in the German eastern territories in former times.⁹⁰ Instead, however, the German eastern territories have been severed from the rest of Germany and are thus unable to supply the latter with their surplus products (this alone means the loss of one-fourth of the foodstuffs needed by Germany). In addition, practically the whole population of the German eastern territories has been compulsorily re-settled in the rest of Germany, and thus has to be supplied with the foodstuffs produced there, which barely suffice to meet Germany's own needs. Owing to this increased demand for foodstuffs with no possibility of increasing production Germany, since World War II, has only been able to produce about half the amount of foodstuffs it actually needs. This shortage of foodstuffs has rendered a considerable increase in imports necessary, which in its turn has necessitated an increase in industry.⁹¹

⁹⁰ For further details on the importance of Silesia and the other German eastern territories as regards agriculture and forestry see publication of the Deutsches Buero fuer Friedensfragen 11/2676/48, p 39 ff.

⁹¹ See Silesian Atlas, *loc cit*, appendix, p. 13 ff.

3) Industry in Silesia

Silesia is the only eastern province which, in addition to a highly developed agriculture and forestry, also possesses a more highly developed industry than the other provinces. Occupational statistics for 1925 show that at that time 22.4 per cent of the population were employed in agriculture, 37.5 per cent in industry and manual trades, 14 per cent in commerce, and 26.1 per cent in public and domestic service and in the free professions.

Occupational Statistics for Silesia, 1925

Number of employed in principal classes

<u>Industry</u>	<u>Number of Employed</u>
Mining (hard coal)	86,067
Mining (lignite)	6,795
Mining (ores)	4,189
Quarrying	81,848
Metallurgical industry	28,233
Hardware	32,618
Construction of machinery, mechanical appliances, and vehicles	48,650
Electrical, fine mechanical, optical	17,310
Chemical	7,774
Textile	87,554
Paper and printing	32,457
Leather and linoleum	7,818
Woodworking and carving	63,163
Musical instruments	2,088
Foodstuffs	91,746
Clothing	93,431
Construction and building trades	111,878
Public utilities	9,398
Industry and manual trades	813,017 ⁹²

These statistics show how many-sided industrial and economic activity was in Silesia.

As a result of the severance of Eastern Upper Silesia in 1921 the most valuable areas of the Upper Silesian mining district passed into the possession of Poland. Germany, however, still retained seven large hard coal deposits in Upper Silesia, five others in the Walden-

⁹² See Geisler, *loc. cit.*

burg district and two in the Neurode district, as well as nineteen lignite deposits, most of them in Lusatia. The latter, which are mostly located west of the Oder-Neisse line, are thus in the Russian Zone of Germany. Most of the other deposits are located in the East German territory now under Polish administration. Prussian statistics for 1931 show the amount of production classed according to the Boards of Mining; the statistics listed under the district of the Breslau Board of Mining include production in the entire East German territory. It must be remembered that 1931 was the year of the world crisis, and that an improvement in economic conditions in general in the years that followed resulted in an increase of about 50 per cent in the production of the mining industry. These statistics also list the total amount of production in Prussia, and in this connection it must be pointed out that the figures for the German Reich at that time were not much higher, since the Saar territory was under separate administration and did not count as part of the German Reich until after the plebiscite in 1935.

Minerals & ores	Production in district under Breslau Board of Mining		Total Production in Prussia	
	No of mines	Tons	No of mines	Tons
Hard coal	27	21,330,570	221	115,351,758
Lignite	24	8,831,868	212	111,368,437
Amber	1	314	1	314
Iron ores	3	286	83	1,709,927
Zinc ores	3	172,076	16	216,756
Lead ores	4	22,766	24	120,009
Arsenious ores	1	4,416	1	4,416
Pyrites	1	4,330	4	217,230

According to the latest statistics the amount of hard coal which can be mined down to a depth of 3,000 feet in the entire Upper Silesian coal-basin is estimated at 63.4 milliard tons. The following statistics show the amount of hard coal mined in the various districts:

Western Upper Silesia	3.3 milliard tons
Eastern Upper Silesia	44.9 milliard tons
Ostrau-Karwin-Olsa	6.3 milliard tons
Dombrova-Cracow	8.9 milliard tons
Total amount:	63.4 milliard tons

As regards the Waldenburg and Neurode coal-district, estimates of the coal supplies available down to a depth of 3,000 feet vary. The minimum amount estimated is .6 milliard tons and the maximum

1.24 milliard tons. This difference in the amounts estimated is due to the fact that the only figures available as regards the size and thickness of the coal-seams at a greater depth are based on the results of a few deep-mining experiments.⁹³ In the Ruhr district the supplies of coal available from seams which can be mined down to a depth of 3,600 feet only amount to 34 milliard tons.⁹⁴

In 1938 the number of miners employed in Western Upper Silesia was 52,395 and the coal mined amounted to 25,983,299 tons, whilst in Eastern Upper Silesia in the same year the number of miners amounted to 53,371 and the coal mined to 28,290,876 tons.⁹⁵

4) Ecclesiastical Conditions in Silesia

a) The Catholic Church

In 1929 after the severance of the dioceses of Katowice⁹⁶ and Berlin⁹⁷ statistics for the archdiocese of Breslau were as follows:

	Catholics	Total Population
German part of diocese	1,949,926	5,218,548
Czech part of diocese	291,559	384,897
Entire diocese	2,241,485	5,603,445

Statistics for pastoral offices in the archdiocese of Breslau in 1929 were as follows:

	German Part	Czech Part	Entire Diocese
Parishes	708	80	788
Curacies	55	—	55
Locums	23	—	23
Chapels of ease	192	19	211
Adj. mother-churches	205	—	205
Chapel communities	29	2	31

⁹³ Cf. *Der Steinkohlenbergbau in Schlesien*. Goehmann'sche Buchdruckerei, Hannover, 1947

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 27-28.

⁹⁵ For further details concerning mining and industrial production in Silesia see publication of the Deutsches Buero fuer Friedensfragen II/2676/48, p. 43 ff.

⁹⁶ By the Papal Bull "Vixdum Poloniae unitas" of October 28, 1925, the diocese of Katowice was separated from the archdiocese of Breslau.

⁹⁷ Pursuant to Article 2, subsection 6 of the Prussian Concordat of June 14, 1929, and on the strength of the Papal Bull of circumscription, "Pastoralis officii Nostri", of August 13, 1930, the so-called delegacy of Berlin, which had formerly been administered by the prince-bishop of Breslau, was separated from the diocese of Breslau and became an independent diocese.

Statistics as regards the number of churches in existence in 1929 in the archdiocese of Breslau were as follows:

	<u>German Part</u>	<u>Czech Part</u>	<u>Entire Diocese</u>
Parish-churches	788	80	868
Other churches	411	19	430
Chapels	537	112	649 ⁹⁸

According to the last official ecclesiastical census in the year 1940, the statistics of which were published in 1943⁹⁹, the entire archdiocese of Breslau (including the Sudeten German district of Freiwaldau and the Olsa district) comprised the following:

788 parishes, 118 other pastoral districts with their own pastor, 1,234 parish-priests, 336 secular clergymen (in school-service, army-service, church administration, and including retired clergymen) with a population numbering 2,324,058 Catholics and 3,560,903 persons of other denominations. The total population of the entire diocese thus numbered 5,884,961 persons. At the beginning of 1945 the archdiocese of Breslau included 12 commissariats, 86 archpresbyterates (deaneries), 810 parishes, 56 curacies, 44 locums, and 637 subordinate pastorates. The number of chief and subordinate pastorates in the entire diocese thus amounted to 1557.

The vicariate-general of Glatz (belonging to the archdiocese of Prague) included 55 parishes with 165,095 Catholics and 19,139 persons of other denominations. The vicariate-general of Branitz (belonging to the archdiocese of Olmuetz) included 41 parishes with 81,776 Catholics and 7,285 persons of other denominations.¹⁰⁰

In 1932 the diocese of Katowice included 180 parishes and 8 independent curacies, 379 secular and regular priests, with 1,193,499 Catholics and 67,050 Protestants.

The archdiocese of Breslau consisted of 12 commissariats, that is to say administrative districts, namely Breslau, Freiwaldau, Glogau, Gross-Strehlitz, Hirschberg, Jauer, Muensterberg, Neisse, Oppeln, Ratibor, Trachenberg, and the Olsa district¹⁰¹, which were subdivided into archpresbyterates (deaneries).¹⁰²

⁹⁸ Cf *Real-Handbuch des Bistums Breslau*, p. 483 ff. Breslau, 1929

⁹⁹ Cf Krose, *Kirchliches Handbuch für das katholische Deutschland*, Vol 22. Verlag Bachem, Cologne, 1943.

¹⁰⁰ Cf Kaps, *Handbuch für das katholische Schlesien*, p 225. Verlag "Christ Unterwegs", Munich, 1951

¹⁰¹ Cf *Handbuch des Erzbistums Breslau für das Jahr 1941*, p 10 ff Breslau

¹⁰² For further statistics on the deaneries and parishes see *Handbuch für das katholische Schlesien*, p 222 ff.

Silesia possessed numerous monasteries and monastic institutions. The following religious orders and congregations for men existed there:

Benedictines, Franciscans, Jesuits, Camillians, Marist Missionaries, Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Clarentines, Oblates, Pallottines, Redemptorists, Salvators, Society of the Divine Word, Brothers of Charity of St. Joannis de Deo, Poor Brothers of Saint Francis Seraphicus.¹⁰³

The religious orders and congregations for women were as follows:

Sisters of Charity of Saint Charles Borromeo (179 convents, 2 of which were in Bohemia and Moravia), Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ (3 convents), Sisters of Saint Augustine (1 convent), Sisters of Saint Elisabeth (7 convents), Sisters of Mercy of Saint Francis (18 convents), Poor Sisters of Mercy of the Third Order of Saint Francis (5 convents), Congregation of the Sisters of the Third Order of Saint Francis of Christian Charity (2 convents), Franciscans (1 convent), Gray Sisters of Saint Elisabeth (121 convents in the province of Lower Silesia, 75 convents in the province of Upper Silesia, and 2 convents in the province of Brandenburg), Sisterhoods of the Good Shepherd (3 convents), Sisters of Saint Hedwig (19 convents), Congregation of the Daughters of Our Divine Saviour (2 convents), Servants of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (4 convents), Congregation of the Poor Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (10 convents), Congregation of the Sisters of the Divine Heart of Jesus (3 convents), Discalced Carmelites (1 convent), Sisters of Mary Magdalene (1 convent), Sister-Servants of the Immaculate Conception (137 convents), Sisters of Saint Mary (32 convents in the province of Lower Silesia and 22 convents in the province of Upper Silesia), Salvators (2 convents), Poor Sisters of Our Lady (34 convents), Sisters of the Mission of Steyle (1 convent), Ursulines of Breslau (3 convents), Ursulines of Freiwaldau (1 convent), Ursulines of Liebenthal near Loewenberg (4 convents), Ursulines of Ratibor (1 convent), Ursulines of Schweidnitz (3 convents), Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul (4 convents).¹⁰⁴

b) The Protestant Church

The Protestant ecclesiastical province of Silesia was divided into the two dioceses of Breslau-Oppeln and Liegnitz. The diocese of Breslau comprised the following 21 ecclesiastical districts: Breslau City I, Breslau City II, Breslau rural areas, Bernstadt-Namslau, Brieg,

¹⁰³ Cf *Handbuch des Erzbistums Breslau für das Jahr 1941*, p 103 ff. Breslau

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p 114 ff

Frankenstein-Muensterberg, Glatz, Guhrau-Herrnstadt, Militsch-Trachenberg, Neumarkt, Nimptsch, Oels, Ohlau, Schweidnitz-Reichenbach, Steinau, Strehlen, Striegau, Trebnitz, Waldenburg, Gross-Wartenberg, Wohlau. The diocese of Oppeln included the following 5 ecclesiastical districts: Gleiwitz, Kreuzburg in Upper Silesia, Neisse, Oppeln, and Ratibor. The following 26 ecclesiastical districts constituted the diocese of Liegnitz: Bolkenham, Bunzlau I, Bunzlau II, Freystadt, Glogau, Goerlitz I, Goerlitz II, Goerlitz II, Goldberg, the diocese of Gruenberg, Haynau, Hirschberg, Hoyerswerda, Jauer, Landeshut, Lauban, Liegnitz, Loewenberg I, Loewenberg II, Lueben Parchwitz, Rothenburg I, Rothenburg II, Sagan, Schoenau an der Katzbach, and Sprottau.¹⁰⁵

SECTION III

Events after the Russian Invasion in 1945¹⁰⁶

1) The Battle of Silesia

Beginning in the north at the Kurisch Haff, the Eastern front in the autumn of 1944 proceeded along the Narev, that is to say, for the most part along the Eastern Prussian frontier, and then along the Vistula. The Russians had succeeded in setting up bridgeheads at Magnussev, Pulawy, and Baranov on the west side of the Vistula. Southwest of Baranov the German front proceeded across the Vistula in an easterly direction, then turning south and proceeding in a straight line to Hungary.¹⁰⁷ When the Russians had invaded East Prussia in the summer of 1944 the National Socialist Party district leader there, Koch, had appealed to the population to help with the large-scale construction of trenches and field fortifications. Similar measures had also been adopted in West Prussia, Pomerania, in the

¹⁰⁵ Cf *Deutsches Kirchliches Adressbuch; Ein kirchl Fuehrer durch die evangelischen Landeskirchen Deutschlands* Compiled from data supplied by the ecclesiastical authorities Ed 1929 (2) Publ by Evangelischer Presseverband fuer Deutschland, Berlin-Steglitz According to statistics in this work, the ecclesiastical province of Silesia numbered 1,788,895 Protestants in 1929; of these, 1,007,473 belonged to the diocese of Breslau-Oppeln, and 781,422 to the diocese of Liegnitz

¹⁰⁶ As regards the subject matter of the following accounts the author had extensive sources at his disposal, namely, hitherto unpublished reports from the diocese of Breslau on events since the beginning of 1945, and, in addition, pastoral messages by Silesian clergymen to members of their parish now scattered in various districts A list of these messages is contained in *Handbuch fuer das katholische Schlesien*, loc cit, pp 229—230

¹⁰⁷ Cf Sketch I of Appendix.

Warthe district, and in Silesia. Thousands of German civilians, including women, and also Polish workers and prisoners-of-war, were engaged in building fieldworks, barricades, and entrenchments. In Lower Silesia, the Party district leader, Hanke, had drawn up a large-scale project known as the "Barthold Project", a romantic allusion to a legendary castellan of this name who was supposed to have lived in the days when Silesia was first settled, 700 years ago, and the Silesians had defended themselves against the Mongolian invasion.¹⁰⁸

In January, 1945, the fortification lines which had been set up were unfortunately not manned as all the available reserves had been transferred to the West where the Ardennes offensive, which had begun on December 16th, 1944, was in progress. Furthermore, all attempts to straighten and shorten the German front in the East by resorting to the so-called "Schlittenfahrt Plan"¹⁰⁹ had been violently opposed by the Supreme Command, which refused to believe that a Russian attack was imminent.

During the night of January 11th to 12th, 1945, the long period of quiet on the Eastern front was suddenly broken by Russian artillery drumfire which lasted for hours and was the heaviest so far experienced in the course of the war. It was followed by the advance of numerous narrow spearheads from the above-mentioned bridgeheads, and the enemy very soon succeeded in breaking through the disintegrated German front. Endless columns of Russian tanks followed in the wake of the spearheads, and by the evening of January 16th the enemy was already approaching Cracow. Command A, which had been entrusted with the task of defending both Silesian provinces was unable to halt the advance of the Russian forces, which were commanded by Marshal Konjev. On January 19th, 1945, Russian tank armies crossed the Silesian frontier west of Tschenstochau, between Guttentag and Kreuzburg in Upper Silesia. The headquarters of Command A had already been transferred to Oppeln by the time their new chief, General Schoerner¹¹⁰, arrived there on January 20th. A few days later Russian tank spearheads reached Brieg, east of Breslau, and Steinau on the Oder, north of Breslau, and, after crossing the Oder, set up extensive bridgeheads at both these points. After having advanced for a fortnight the

¹⁰⁸ Cf. K. Engelbert, "Kritik zu dem Roman von Hans Venatier, 'Vogt Barthold. Der grosse Zug nach dem Osten'", in *Archiv*, Vol VII, p 277. According to Engelbert, Barthold is a fictitious character created by Venatier.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Jürgen Thorwald, *Es begann an der Weichsel*, p 16 ff. Steingrueben, Stuttgart, 1950.

¹¹⁰ He was promoted to the rank of field marshal in February, 1945. For further details regarding his personality, see Thorwald, *loc cit*, p 102 ff.

Russians had now reached the heart of Silesia, a fact which prompted the Party district leader of Lower Silesia, Hanke, to retract the statement he had made so often, namely that the enemy would never be able to cross the Silesian frontier. On January 20th, he issued orders to the effect that the Silesian population in the districts adjoining the former Polish frontier was to be evacuated, a matter which he had so far neglected in a most unwarrantable manner, despite the fact that trains crowded with refugees and also treks from the administrative province of Poland and the Warthe district had been passing through Silesia continuously for several days.¹¹¹

On January 20th, 1945, the exodus of about 700,000 persons from Breslau, the capital of Silesia, began. Preparations were now made for the siege. All the various Party organizations were called up to help with the evacuation of the population. As there were not enough trains, omnibuses, and motor lorries available to convey the women and children and the sick out of the town, orders were issued by loudspeakers in the streets, on January 20th and 21st, that women and children were to leave Breslau on foot and proceed in the direction of Opperau-Kanth. It was about this time that an extremely cold spell of weather set in and the temperature dropped to about four degrees below zero. There was an icy east wind blowing as the women of Breslau set out on their tragic trek. The exact number of women and children who died of exposure and exhaustion on the treks from Breslau will probably never be ascertained. Many of the evacuees returned to Breslau, a fact which prompted those who had remained behind to decide to hold out in the beleaguered city if there was no chance of getting away by train. There were thus about two to three hundred thousand civilians in Breslau when the city was encircled by the enemy on February 16th, 1945.¹¹²

The Fortress of Breslau¹¹³

It is not necessary at this point to give a detailed account of military events in the battle of Silesia since this is done in Part Two.¹¹⁴ Some mention must, however, be made of conditions in the fortress of Breslau as regards ecclesiastical matters.

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 106.

¹¹² The Russians shelled Breslau as early as January 27th, 1945. Cf Engelbert, *Geschichte der Pfarrei St. Michael*, p. 158.

¹¹³ The author's account of events in the fortress of Breslau is based on his own personal experiences there.

¹¹⁴ Cf Friedrich Grieger, *Wie Breslau fiel*, p. 13 ff, in particular Die Zukunft, Metzingen, Wuerttemberg, 1948. Also accounts in following: Juergen Thorwald, *Es begann an der Weichsel*, pp 126, 134 ff, and Juergen Thorwald, *Das Ende an der Elbe*, p 314 ff Stuttgart, 1950.

At first the Gestapo was only willing to allow eleven clergymen to remain in the beleaguered city, but eventually, after persistent negotiating on the part of the vicar-general of Breslau, thirty-five clergymen received permission to remain. In addition, about ten Catholic priests stayed behind in the city, unbeknown to the Gestapo. Indeed, it was a good thing they did, for during the three months in which Breslau was besieged all the clergymen were needed to see to the spiritual welfare of the troops and the civilians in the fortress. Enemy planes and artillery bombed and shelled the city to an ever-increasing degree. By March 21st, 1945, various churches had suffered considerable damage. In order to construct a new airport in the centre of the city, at the Scheitniger Stern on the Kaiser Street, rows of buildings and streets were set fire to, pulled down, and demolished. Two churches in this district were also destroyed, — the Catholic church of St. Peter Canisius, with its vicarage, and the Protestant Lutheran Church and vicarage. The cathedral precincts were greatly endangered as long-barrelled artillery had been set up in a long row in the gardens of the administrative buildings of the cathedral and the archbishop's palace along the Oder. The objections raised by all the Catholic priests, namely that this artillery would endanger the cathedral and its precincts, were, however, disregarded, and the cannon remained where they were. The exterior of the cathedral was soon damaged by small shells, and during the night of March 24th a bomb fell onto the right side-aisle in front of the vestry. All the other churches in Breslau were also damaged by bombs and shells during the month of March.

The greatest disaster in the course of the siege of Breslau occurred at Easter.¹¹⁵ A few days previously the population of Breslau had been warned by leaflets, dropped by Russian planes, and by loud-speakers, set up by the enemy on the streets he had already captured, that the city would be razed to the ground if it did not surrender. The Germans did not, however, comply with the enemy's request to surrender, and the fate of the city was now sealed. On April 1st, 1945, Easter Sunday, enemy planes attacked the city all day long without a pause and showered high explosive and incendiary bombs on it. On Easter Monday enemy planes attacked the "terra sancta" of the cathedral precincts which rapidly became a sheet of fire. The enemy continued his heavy air-raids throughout the whole of the day. The number of American-type bombers which took part in these

¹¹⁵ The following data has been taken from the ecclesiastical reports on events in the fortress of Breslau

raids was estimated at about 1,200. The Russian planes, which, on account of their old-fashioned type, were called "sewing-machines" by the Germans, were less dreaded. Thousands of incendiary bombs were dropped on the city. To make matters worse, a storm, fanned by the flames, began to rage, and one street after another caught fire. The Archbishop's Palace was demolished. Religious services had latterly been held there, in the so-called crypt, an old, vaulted cellar, which remained undamaged, and continued to be used for services. On Easter Tuesday the Bishop's Palace was destroyed by fire and so were the Church of St. Maria auf dem Sande and the two administrative buildings near the cathedral bridge. The prelates' buildings also caught fire, and the conflagration rapidly spread to the Bishop's Palace, the Cathedral, the Marianum, the boys' cathedral-school, and the convents of the Order of St. Mary and of the Franciscan nuns. The cathedral itself was also damaged in the course of the enemy's air-raids at Easter, and both towers were destroyed by fire. On Easter Tuesday one of the burning spires crashed into the nave of the cathedral. The roof over the nave and the side-aisles was also destroyed by fire, and as it crashed into the cathedral much of the vaulting was likewise damaged. Only three of the chapels remained undamaged, namely the Royal Chapel, St. Mary's Chapel, and St. Elisabeth's Chapel in the eastern transept.¹¹⁶ When the Marianum burned down the remaining buildings in the Cathedral Close, including the verger's house, the administrative buildings of the suffragan bishop, and the curates' quarters, were also destroyed by fire. The Georgianum (the head theological seminary) was hit by bombs, but was for the most part undamaged. The buildings belonging to the Charity Society on the cathedral square were also undamaged and were later used as the official seat of the vicar-general and the suffragan bishop. — The cathedral-school for boys was burnt down on Easter Tuesday. The conflagration in the cathedral precincts spread to Joseph Street, with the result that the main building of the Convent of the Franciscan nuns and the novices' house, as well as St. Joseph's Hospital were all destroyed by fire. St. Egidius' Monastery was not destroyed by fire, but part of it was damaged by bombs and the rest of it, including the small chapel, was almost completely demolished by the violence of the explosions and by shells. The Church of the Holy Cross was very badly damaged by

¹¹⁶ The marble statue of the Holy Virgin, by Steinhäuser, which in the course of time came to be regarded as an image that worked miracles and which at the time of the enemy's air-raids stood in a niche near to the entrance of the Royal Chapel, also remained undamaged. See Kaps, *Heilige Heimat*, loc cit., p 19, for further details on Breslau Cathedral after the catastrophe of 1945

bombs and shells. Part of the vaulting collapsed and crashed through the floor into the crypt. The only parts of St. Mary's, called the "Sandkirche"¹¹⁷, which were not damaged during the enemy's air-raids at Easter were the tower and the walls. The entire vaulting collapsed. The Russians set fire to the tower after they had captured the city.¹¹⁸ St. Michael's Church¹¹⁹ was demolished completely save for its towers, and the adjoining vicarage was destroyed by fire. St. Vincent's Church was damaged most, and its tower was demolished completely. The vaulting of the three churches or chapels of St. Ursula on Ritter Square collapsed, and the tower was later destroyed by fire on the last day of the siege of the city. The Church of St. Mauritius and the vicarage also burned down on Easter Tuesday. The roof and walls of the Church of Corpus Christi and St. Dorothea's Church suffered extensive damage. St. Adalbert's Church was so badly damaged that it could no longer be used for divine service. St. Ceslaus' Chapel suffered comparatively little damage. The Church of St. Boniface was the only Catholic church in Breslau where mass could be celebrated every day throughout the entire siege. With the exception of one bomb which hit the wall on the west side of the church and failed to explode, and the usual damage to windows, St. Boniface's survived the siege better than any other of the churches in Breslau. St. Matthew's Church¹²⁰ was hit by bombs and very badly damaged. Both towers of St. Henry's Church were destroyed by shells and the roof and nave were demolished by bombs. The Church of St. Carolus was also damaged very considerably. The

¹¹⁷ The fate of the parish-church and parish of "St Maria auf dem Sande" during the years from 1945 to 1947 is described in detail by the last curate, Professor Dr. Brzoska, in *Arena-Brief, Nr. 5/6*, printed as a manuscript by Besser, Ochsensfurt.

¹¹⁸ Grieger, *loc. cit.*, p 21—22 ff, gives a detailed and moving account of the fate of the University and State Library, which was housed in the secularized Augustinian monastery in Sand Street. All that remained of the 550,000 volumes still stored there was a heap of ashes. A huge number of books had been previously transferred from the State Library to the Church of St. Anne's nearby and to the refectory of the University. The enemy then set fire to these two buildings on May 11, 1945, four days after the capitulation. The author himself can corroborate this data on the strength of his own personal experiences.

¹¹⁹ A detailed account of the destruction of the church of the parish of St. Michael's, which numbered 17,000 parishioners, is contained in K Engelbert, *Geschichte der Pfarrei St. Michael*, *loc. cit.* Cf also pastoral message of March, 1947, by the last vicar of St. Michael's, Canon J Engelbert, *St Michael, Breslau 1945/46*.

¹²⁰ Thanks to the initiative of the vicar, Canon Schoenauer, it was completely restored soon after the capitulation.

Jesuit Church of St. Ignatius on Gabitz Street did not suffer very much damage. The Church of St. Nicholas was heavily shelled and completely demolished. Parts of the church collapsed and the tower was damaged beyond repair. The wooden Church of St. Rochus on the Belvedere Cemetery was completely destroyed by fire. Only the roof and the windows of the Church of Christ The Lord were damaged. St. Hedwig's Church was hit by bombs on Easter Saturday and most of it was destroyed. The remaining part of the building was later blown up. St. George's Chapel, which belonged to the lay brothers, remained undamaged. St. Conrad's Church and the vicarge burned down. The Catholic Church of St. Elisabeth was for the most part undamaged. The Church of St. Clement Hofbauer was destroyed completely. The Churches of the Holy Family, the Holy Ghost, and St. Joseph's suffered the usual kind of damage by bombs and shells. The Catholic church in Breslau-Lissa was not damaged, neither was the Catholic church in Breslau-Ohlewiesen, with the exception of some damage to the roof. St. Agnes' Church in Masselwitz was not damaged during the siege, but in July, 1945, incendiaries wilfully set fire to it. St. Jacob's Church in Breslau-Hundsfeld was already blown up on February 16th, 1945, by the S. S., allegedly for strategical reasons. The church of the Franciscan monastery in Carlowitz, which the S.S. had also intended to blow up, was hit by shells, but the damage was comparatively slight and was soon repaired.¹²¹

From Easter onwards the situation of the troops and the civilians in the beleaguered fortress of Breslau became more and more unbearable. The entire city was ablaze and this spectacle at night reminded one of certain passages in the Book of Revelations. The air-raid shelters and cellars were crowded with terrified and agitated men and women, who in their dreadful distress and despair fled from one part of the city to another. Again and again they would say, "Where can we go to for safety? This side of the Oder isn't safe, and the other side isn't safe, either. The best thing to do is to drown oneself in the Oder!" Cases of mental derangement and suicides became more and more frequent, whilst the number of casualties caused by the shelling and bombing likewise increased. There was, moreover, no delegation of representatives of the citizens who would have ventured to present a petition to the commander of the fortress, since such a measure, according to martial law, would have been regarded as an act of sabotage, and in case of serious objections on the part of the delegation would have been bound to end in capital

¹²¹ For details see also the various pastoral messages by Silesian clergymen in *Handbuch*, loc cit, pp. 229-230

punishment for those concerned.¹²² The execution of the mayor of Breslau, Dr. Spielhagen, on January 29th, 1945, had been warning enough. Red placards had been posted all over the city informing the population that the mayor, Dr. Spielhagen, had been shot according to martial law in front of the monument of Frederick II on the Breslau Ring at six o'clock in the morning, by order of the Party district leader, Hanke, as Reichs defense commissary, because, to quote the words on the placard, "he intended leaving Breslau and his post without permission and seeking employment elsewhere." The final words of warning on the placard were, "Those who are afraid to die an honourable death will die in ignominy!"¹²³

In view of the hopeless situation it became more and more evident to the leading men of both the Catholic and the Protestant Church that the Church must act on its own responsibility. Conditions in the beleaguered city were growing increasingly difficult from day to day. Every morning and every evening the city was heavily shelled by the enemy. On May 4th, 1945, there was some talk of negotiations regarding the surrender of the city. The Russians announced their terms through loudspeakers set up in the streets they had captured, but the Germans still refused to accept these terms. The Breslau clergymen thereupon decided to send a deputation to General Niehoff, the commander of the fortress. The deputation consisted of two Catholic and two Protestant clergymen. The Catholic Church was represented by Suffragan Bishop Ferche¹²⁴ and deputy Vicar-general Kramer, a member of the Cathedral Chapter, whilst the representatives of the Protestant Church were Pastor Hornig, who later became the Protestant Bishop of Silesia, and Pastor Dr. Konrad. The commander of the fortress sent his car to convey the four representatives of the Church to the University Library, as he had set up his headquarters in the cellars there during the latter part of the siege. After Bishop Ferche had presented their petition, Pastor Hornig made a speech lasting about twenty minutes in the presence of General Niehoff, his adjutant, and his chief general staff officer. None of the leading men of the National Socialist Party in Breslau were present. Pastor Hornig described the dreadful sufferings of the population and stressed that in the opinion of the inhabitants of Breslau it seemed unwarrantable,

¹²² Cf Prof Dr Konrad, "Vor funf Jahren fiel Breslau ", in the *Rheinische Post*, of May 6th, 1950

¹²³ Cf. Friedrich Grieger, *loc cit*, p 11

¹²⁴ Suffragan Bishop Ferche gave the author a personal account of the discussion that took place

in view of the military situation in general, to continue to defend the city. In conclusion, he appealed to the General's better feelings and begged him to remember that he would some day be called to account by the Heavenly Father for any decision he might reach. There followed a discussion which lasted about an hour and during which General Niehoff revealed his plan to make a sortie to the four clergymen. By means of this sortie he intended to break through the Russian lines with all the troops in the fortress and then force his way through to Schoerner's army which was posted between the Zobten and the Sudetic Mountains. Objections were raised by the clergymen as to what would then happen to the civilian population and above all to the sick, the wounded, the aged, and the children, who could not be left to face their fate alone. Thereupon the discussion was politely terminated without any definite answer, however, having been given to the clergymen's petition. But, according to the accounts of the members of the deputation, the General was deeply impressed by Pastor Hornig's speech. The inhabitants of Breslau heard of the intercession of the four clergymen with considerable satisfaction. In the course of the afternoon an officer called for Pastor Hornig at his house. The latter at first feared that he was going to be arrested, but this was not the case. A conference of the commanding officers of the fortress was to take place that same afternoon in the presence of General Niehoff. Pastor Hornig was requested to speak at this conference, which he did. The commanding officers, with the exception of four S.S. officers, undoubtedly agreed with Pastor Hornig's views. Meanwhile, however, Party district leader, Hanke, had heard of the action taken by the clergymen and he promptly resorted to counter-measures. The next, and incidentally the last bulletin issued in the fortress, contained a threat to take immediate action against all defeatist elements. — The Russians now set a new ultimatum, in which they stated that an attack which would destroy the entire city would be carried out on Monday, May 7th, 1945. At six o'clock in the morning on Sunday, May 6th, a plane bearing a white truce-flag left the fortress and flew over to the enemy. Not a single shot was fired all that day. When Bishop Ferche and Pastor Hornig once more called on General Niehoff in the late afternoon he informed them that the decision they had wished for had already been reached. Incidentally, Party district leader, Hanke, left Breslau in a Fieseler-Storch plane during the night of May 5th to 6th. It was the first and last plane to take off from the new runway which had been built near to Kaiser Bridge and which cost the population so great a sacrifice. What happened to Hanke after he fled from Breslau has never been

definitely ascertained. In August, 1945, the author met an officer in W— in Thuringia who had recently returned home after being a prisoner-of-war in Russia and who said that he had seen General Niehoff and Hanke in an officers' p.o.w.-camp there. According to other reports Hanke is said to have been shot by Poles who did not recognize him, after he fled from Breslau. — There can, however, be no doubt whatsoever about the fact that the sufferings of the population were alleviated and that the rest of the city was saved from further destruction — about seventy per cent of the buildings had already been destroyed — by the action of the clergymen. In view of the dreadful fate which had so far befallen the fortress of Breslau, it was obvious that the Russians, sure of their victory, would make good their threats and raze the rest of the city to the ground. On the other hand, however, it was fortunate that the city did not capitulate until May 7th, the day before the entire capitulation of Germany occurred. In this way the Russians were prevented from resorting to measures which they had so far adopted as regards German civilians in the rear zones of the fighting-front, where they had abducted most of the menfolk and many of the women, who had been subjected to the usual indignities and brutal treatment, and had taken them to Russia. But the sufferings of the inhabitants of Breslau were by no means ended. Contrary to the terms of the agreement reached, which stipulated that the city should be surrendered during the morning hours of May 7th, 1945, the Russians seized possession on the evening of May 6th, and immediately began looting and ransacking, and raping the womenfolk, a state of affairs to which the population was subjected for several months. Thus ended the siege of Breslau after a heroic attempt had been made for three whole months to defend the city. It has been estimated that 40,000 soldiers and civilians lost their lives during the siege of Breslau.

The fact that the surrender of the city was due to the influence of the Church has acquired especial significance in the history of the Church. The mutual confidence which both Churches, their clergymen and their adherents, had in each other throughout the long siege and when they presented their petition to the commander of the fortress was prompted by the spirit of brotherhood, which has always prevailed in Silesia; and the brotherly kiss which the leading clergymen of both Churches exchanged at that time sealed their mutual confidence in each other.¹²⁵

¹²⁵ Cf. Prof. Dr. Konrad, "Vor fünf Jahren fiel Breslau. .", in the *Rheinische Post*, of May 6th, 1950

The Fighting in Other Districts of Silesia¹²⁶

In Upper Silesia the Party district leader, Bracht, had issued orders to the effect that no evacuation measures were to be adopted. As a result, most of the population there had remained behind. No one was allowed to leave their place of work, — a precautionary measure to prevent a decrease in the production of the Upper Silesian industrial district which was the only industrial district in the whole of Germany which had not suffered as a result of the war. The Russian armies, however, now began to close in on this district from the north and the south. On January 22nd and 23rd, 1945, Russian troops entered Gleiwitz and Beuthen. Fighting at the pitheads was already in progress whilst the miners were still working in the galleries down below. The situation as far as the German troops were concerned was so hopeless that Field Marshal Schoerner, on his own responsibility, issued an order that they were to withdraw from the industrial district and that the 17th Army was to retreat as far as the Oder, to the sector between Ratibor and Cosel. It was too late, however, to do anything for the civilian population.¹²⁷ The retreating troops set up a front to the west of the industrial district and for the most part managed to hold this front until the capitulation on May 8th, 1945. A dreadful fate, however, befell the population of Upper Silesia. The entry of the Russian troops took most of the inhabitants of the industrial towns by surprise. Many of them were still at work in the factories when the Russian tanks swarmed into the town. Eyewitness accounts of what happened are almost unbelievable. Months before the general capitulation the fate of the population of Upper Silesia was decided by the Russians. One of the first measures adopted by the Russian military commandant's headquarters was to affix placards all over the towns in the industrial district, as for instance in Oppeln and Brieg, the purpose of which was to round up all male civilians and then abduct them to Russia. These placards were worded as follows: "All men between the ages

¹²⁶ Countless Silesians, who sought to escape the Russian menace by going westwards, lost their lives during the big British air-raid on Dresden on February 13th and 14th, 1945. (Cf Juergen Thorwald, *Es begann an der Weichsel*, loc. cit., p 122.) The famous Silesian author, Gerhart Hauptmann, who personally experienced the air-raid on Dresden as a refugee there, later gave vent to his indignation at the destruction of a city which had been one of the cultural centres of the world. He did not long survive the downfall of his native province of Silesia. On June 6th, 1946, he died at his house in Agnetendorf in the Riesengebirge. (Cf Felix A Voigt, *Gerhart Hauptmann, der Schlesier*, p. 77. Published by Deutsche Volksbucherei, Goslar, 1947, and "Heimat und Glaube", Lippstadt, November, 1951)

¹²⁷ Cf J Thorwald, *Es begann an der Weichsel*, p 116

of 17 and 60 must report at the police-station within 48 hours' time for temporary work in the rear fighting zone. They must bring with them 2 sets of underclothes, 1 blanket, and if possible, a straw-mattress, as well as their identification-papers and foodrations for 10 to 15 days. Men failing to comply with this order will be tried by court-martial and punished. The Military Commandant."¹²⁸ In this way, in Hindenburg alone, for instance, crowds, in fact, thousands of men were rounded up, taken to camps, and then abducted to Russia.¹²⁹

As many as 40,000 men from Upper Silesia were taken from the collecting camp at Peiskretscham to Russia.^{130/131} A large number of women and girls, too, were taken in cattle-trucks to Siberia and to the districts near the Arctic. In the course of the journey to Russia the Germans who had been abducted received practically no foodrations whatsoever. Some days they were only given half a pint of hot water. On other occasions they received half a pint of soup and sometimes 7 ounces of bread. During the whole of the journey, which usually lasted for several days, they were not allowed to leave the trucks, which were locked and guarded. Countless persons from Silesia and in particular from the German eastern territories which had been captured by the Russians died on these journeys, whilst others died in the camps as a result of starvation, exposure, and the heavy work they were forced to do.¹³² The rest of the Germans who had remained in Upper Silesia were in many cases detained in the camps which the Poles set up all over the country, as for example in Cosel, Gleiwitz¹³³, Auschwitz, and Schwientochlowitz.¹³⁴ It can truly be said, without exaggerating, that Silesia at that time, and in fact the entire German eastern territory, was one huge concentration camp. The Polish penal camp for Germans at Lamsdorf in Upper Silesia and the casemates in Neisse and Grottkau were indeed notorious.¹³⁵ The fate of the defenceless women who had remained behind in Upper Silesia and in the rest of Silesia was the same everywhere, without exception. Regardless of their constitution, women and children were forced to do every kind of heavy work imaginable, including the clearing away

¹²⁸ Cf J Thorwald, *loc. cit*, pp 117-118

¹²⁹ See documentary section, Report No. 12

¹³⁰ See documentary section, Report No 14

¹³¹ See documentary section, Report No 15

¹³² See documentary section, Report No 9

¹³³ See documentary section, Report No 8.

¹³⁴ See *The Martyrdom of Silesian Priests 1945/46*, p 98. Verlag d. Kirchh. Hilfsstelle, Munich, 1950

¹³⁵ See documentary section, Report No 50

of debris and burying the dead. In Lamsdorf and Landeshut¹³⁶, for instance, women were forced to exhume the putrid corpses of Russian soldiers and former Polish concentration camp internees with their hands, put them on biers, and take them to other graves. The most dreadful atrocities were the constant cases of rape which occurred, and neither woman, girls, nor children were spared. An officer of the Red Army¹³⁷ mentions the case of a girl in Bunzlau, who, in the course of three weeks, was raped by more than 250 soldiers. He gives an explanation for this dreadful tragedy by quoting Tolstoy's words, "The cruelty of man towards his fellow-men in our day is due to lack of religion." A Russian commander gave the following explanation: "We must try to understand the mentality of our young people and our soldiers. We must consider the circumstances and conditions under which they have grown up. Have they the least idea at all of the conception of the rights of the individual? How are they to know that the enemy, and even the vanquished enemy, is entitled to certain rights! A person who has been treated with violence all his life is bound to treat others in exactly the same way."¹³⁸

To judge from the conduct of the Red Army in Silesia, it was obvious that the Russians intentionally omitted to set up any kind of administrative system there because the decision had been reached at the outset to hand over this territory to Poland, which was well-disposed towards the Soviets. The Russians set up depots in all the towns and villages throughout Silesia for the purpose of collecting booty. They even confiscated floorboards, doors, door-posts, wash-basins, electric installations and switches, and dispatched them to Russia. Wireless sets and typewriters which had been confiscated were stacked up in huge heaps out in the open for weeks on end, and millions of marks' worth of goods were destroyed in this way. In the rural areas special detachments rounded up all the live-stock. The cattle which was not needed by the Red Army or by marauders was herded together and driven through Poland to Russia in long treks, in the course of which countless animals died.

Meanwhile, the fighting continued in Lower Silesia. From their bridgehead at Steinau the Russian troops advanced towards the west. In the course of their advance towards Lusatia they captured Bunzlau, Sprottau, and Sagan. The same atrocities occurred in Lower Silesia as had happened in Upper Silesia, — cases of looting and

¹³⁶ See documentary section, Report No 173

¹³⁷ See Michael Koriakoff, *Ich wollte Mensch sein*, pp 90-100 Otto Walter A.G., Olten, 1948

¹³⁸ See Koriakoff, *loc cit*, p 100

ransacking, rape, and abduction of men between the ages of 17 and 60 for the purpose of forcing them to work. For this reason most of the population decided to leave all their possessions behind and flee to Saxony. One of the most dreadful atrocities occurred in the pretty little town of Naumburg on the Queis during the night of March 3rd, 1945, when a large number of men and woman, including three priests and some nuns, were massacred by the Russians.¹³⁹

The fortress of Glogau was encircled by Russian forces on February 12th, 1945, and probably few towns have suffered as much as Glogau did during the fifty days' siege. Five thousand civilians had remained behind in the fortress, but on the day it capitulated, Easter 1945, only about eight hundred of them were still alive. There was hardly a house in the town which was not damaged by bombs or by shells during the siege. Glogau's four churches were all of them badly damaged. Ninety-eight per cent of the buildings were destroyed, and Glogau is now a town of ruins and desolation.¹⁴⁰

At the time of the capitulation there was a fairly firmly established German front in Silesia which proceeded from Guben along the western bank of the Neisse, then to the east of Gocrlitz via Lauban, Loewenberg, Striegau, Strehlen, Neisse, Jaegerndorf, Tropaup, Hultschin, Oderberg, and Freistadt to Teschen.¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ Cf Kaps, *The Martyrdom of Silesian Priests 1945/46*, p 45 ff

¹⁴⁰ According to an official report by Archpresbyter Wagner, parish-priest of Glogau Data has also been obtained from the pastoral messages of Canon H Werner of Glogau (died December 8, 1950, in Viersen/Rhld) who refused to desert the aged and the sick in his parish and remained behind in the fortress and thus experienced the tragic fate of the town in which he had been active for forty years In his last touching pastoral messages addressed to his parishioners who had been scattered throughout Germany Canon Werner gives an account of the fate of the valuable property of Glogau Cathedral The madonna by Lukas Cranach had been removed to Heinrichau in 1943, where the valuable possessions of Breslau Cathedral also lay hidden At the beginning of 1945 all the valuables stored at Heinrichau were removed to Bad Landeck in the province of Glatz, where they then fell into the hands of the Russians in the summer of 1945 The large gilt and silver plate (a Bohemian monstrance in the baroque style, a large vessel on which the head of St John was depicted, and the altar crucifix in late baroque and late Gothic style) was stored in a safe at the Deutsche Bank in Glogau, but was seized by the Russians in June, 1945 Despite the fact that various petitions were presented to the Russian commander these valuables were confiscated and taken to Russia Canon Werner was only allowed to keep the important documents which had been stored in the safe and the parochial records. On his expulsion from Glogau the Canon received the only existing pectoral cross, formerly worn by the canons of Glogau, as a souvenir from the commanding officer of the town, who was well-disposed towards the Germans. The valuable processional cross and six large silver candelabra had to be handed over to the new Polish priest

¹⁴¹ See Sketch VII, Appendix

2) *The Church as a Refuge and Protection*

The Silesian clergy after World War II

Germany's military collapse when the Russian armies invaded East Germany occurred simultaneously with the collapse of the National Socialist Party administrative system. The leading Party members in the various districts were either arrested or put to death, or sought to conceal their identity. All that remained in this time of chaos was the Church, to which the people of Silesia and East Germany turned for help and guidance in their great distress and need. It was a great consolation to the Silesian Catholics to know that Cardinal Bertram had not deserted his diocese, but, like them, was waiting for the bitter end, at the castle of Johannesberg, the summer residence of the bishops of Breslau, near Jauernig in the Sudeten-German part of the archdiocese of Breslau.¹⁴² It was likewise a great consolation to the people of Breslau to know that Bishop Ferche had also remained behind in the beleaguered city. And in this time of great need in Silesia, history, as is always the case, was once more repeated, and the Church became a bulwark and protection in the midst of so much suffering. A comparison can be drawn between the fate of the people of Silesia and the part played by the clergy there in 1945, and events in history of an earlier date. In the days of the great tribal migrations when Northern Italy, France, and Spain, and later Northern Africa and Sicily were overrun by the Nordic conquerors, bishops and priests were usually the only persons of authority who approached the enemy and, by petitions and negotiations, managed to persuade the invaders to spare the population. St. Augustine, for instance, in his "Gottesstaat"¹⁴³ relates how Alaric, the king of the Visigoths, at the urgent entreaties of the Pope spared the churches and public buildings when he attacked Rome in 410, thus enabling the population to seek shelter there. Similarly, in the year 452, Pope Leo the Great approached Attila, the king of the Huns, persuaded him to retreat, and thus saved Rome from destruction.¹⁴⁴

a) *The fate of the Silesian bishops*

It was only at the urgent advice of his doctor that Cardinal Bertram allowed himself to be persuaded to go to Jauernig on January 21, 1945, before the enemy completely encircled the fortress and city

¹⁴² Cf Kaps, *Erinnerungen an Kardinal Bertram* Publ. 1948 — Sauer, *Zum Gedenken an Adolf Kardinal Bertram* Koenigstein, 1950

¹⁴³ Civ Dei I,3; III,29; V,23

¹⁴⁴ H Homeyer, *Attila, der Hunnenkönig, von seinen Zeitgenossen dargestellt*, p 206 Walter de Gruyter, Berlin, 1951

of Breslau, The aged Cardinal was broken-hearted when he learnt of the damage done to the Cathedral and its sacred precincts and to most of the Catholic churches in Breslau¹⁴⁵ and when he heard of the tragic fate of his diocese. Cardinal Bertram passed away on July 6th, 1945, and was laid to rest on July 11th, 1945, in the vault of Joseph Christian of Hohenlohe-Bartenstein, the fifty-third primate of Breslau, in the churchyard at Jauernig. Numerous clergymen and Catholics attended his funeral.^{146/147}

Equally tragic was the fate which befell Bishop Maximilian Kaller of Ermland in East Prussia, who was called "The Bishop of the Expellees". A native of Upper Silesia, he was arrested on February 7th, 1945, in the cellar of his house, when it was already being shelled by the Russians, taken to Danzig by the Gestapo, and then expelled from the country. He stayed in Halle until the end of the war, powerless to prevent the destruction of his diocese. When the war was over he undertook the dangerous journey back to Ermland, which took him three weeks, armed with his sole possessions, — two suitcases on a handcart, a haversack, and a rucksack.¹⁴⁸ Like Dr. Piontek, the vicar-capitular, he was forced to renounce his office in that part of his diocese which was now under Polish administration, and he was later expelled from the country by the Polish authorities. He was then appointed by the Pope as the first Papal mandatory for the Germans who had been expelled from their native towns and villages. He took the distress and misery of the expellees entrusted to his care so much to heart that he literally died of a broken heart on July 7th, 1947, in Frankfort on Main. He lies buried in a simple grave behind the parish-church in Koenigstein in the Taunus.¹⁴⁹

No less tragic was the death of Bishop Josef Martin Nathan, the vicar-general of the German part of the archdiocese of Olmuetz, the seat of which was in Branitz. On December 21st, 1946, Bishop

¹⁴⁵ After a hazardous journey the author arrived in Jauernig at the end of June, 1945, in order to give the Cardinal a report on events in Breslau during the siege and after the capitulation

¹⁴⁶ Cf Sauer, *Kardinal Bertram, loc cit*

¹⁴⁷ The headquarters of the administrative authority of the Breslau diocesan estates in the Sudetenland were located at Jauernig. The estates comprised about 127 square miles of land, of which about 123 square miles were forested. Thanks to this truly princely estate the prince-bishops of Breslau were able to build and preserve numerous churches and charity institutions, and also did a great deal for the Freiwaldau district. After 1945 the estate was expropriated by the Czechoslovakian state without compensation.

¹⁴⁸ Bishop Kaller gave the author a personal account of this journey.

¹⁴⁹ Details of the life and work of Bishop Kaller are to be found in Kaps, *The Martyrdom of Silesian Priests, 1945/46*, p 13 ff

Nathan, famous as the founder of the well-known sanatorium in Branitz, Upper Silesia, was informed by the Polish administrative head of the district that he must leave Branitz within a couple of hours' time. Despite the fact that the Bishop was confined to bed with heart-trouble and a temperature and despite the fact that the weather was bitterly cold, the Poles insisted upon his expulsion, and took him to Troppau in a Polish car the very same day. They even refused to allow nurses to accompany the sick bishop in order to look after him. On the journey to Troppau the Bishop contracted double pneumonia which eventually proved fatal. He found a refuge at the St. Mary's Hospital, belonging to the Order of Teutonic Knights, and here his former fellow-worker, Monsignore Rudolf Gaideczka, counsellor to the vicariate-general, who had been expelled from Branitz some months previously, helped and consoled him. He died of heart-failure, jaundice, and pneumonia, in Monsignore Gaideczka's arms, on January 30th, 1947. He was buried in Troppau on February 4th, 1947; Dr. Zela, the suffragan bishop of Olmuetz, officiated at the funeral, which was attended by countless clergymen from the tiny state of Hultschin, the home of his parents, and also by many of the inhabitants and ecclesiastical officials of Troppau. It was indeed a funeral worthy of a bishop. On the day of the funeral special cordons of Polish militia and customs-officials were posted all along the border of that part of Silesia which had been occupied by Poland, in order to prevent the German population in the district of Leobschuetz from attending the funeral.¹⁵⁰

Suffragan Bishop Josef Ferche of Breslau remained behind in the fortress of Breslau together with thirty-five other clergymen whom the Gestapo had not forced to leave before the siege commenced. Towards the end of the siege Bishop Ferche distinguished himself by his courageous intercession on behalf of the population of Breslau in presenting a petition to the commander of the fortress to end the state of siege. After the capitulation he manifested the same courageous attitude in approaching the Russian commander. He spared no efforts on behalf of the members of his diocese after the capitulation, and in the course of the journeys he undertook throughout the country in order to officiate at confirmations he brought courage and solace to the people of Silesia. On July 15th, 1945, an order was issued that he was to be expelled from the country within

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p 19 ff, where his closest co-worker and adviser, the chaplain at the sanatorium, gives an account of the life and work of this great Silesian bishop and philanthropist — See also *Handbuch für das katholische Schlesien*, *loc. cit.*, pp 14-15

twenty-four hours' time, but as he was not in Breslau at the time but on one of his journeys the order could not be carried into effect. The other prebendaries of the Cathedral were, however, forced to leave Breslau immediately. The final order came, however, when, in September, 1946, he was about to undertake a lengthy journey to Brandenburg, Liebenthal, and Greifenberg, where hundreds of German Catholics were eagerly awaiting his arrival. Bishop Ferche was expelled from Breslau within twenty-four hours and was obliged to leave his native country in a cattle-truck. After a journey lasting two days and three nights he arrived at the expellees' camp in Brandenburg on the Havel. After his discharge from the camp he travelled about the Soviet Zone, officiating at confirmations. Finally, on March 27th, 1947, the Archbishop of Cologne, Cardinal Dr. Frings, appointed him suffragan bishop of Cologne, and on December 26th, 1947, he was installed as resident vicar-capitular of the chapter of Cologne Cathedral, where he is still in office. He thus no longer belongs to the chapter of Breslau Cathedral.¹⁵¹

b) The fate of the members of the chapter of Breslau Cathedral

The Provost of Breslau Cathedral, Prelate Dr. Alfons Blaesche, Apostolic Clerk to the Holy See, had been obliged to leave the city at the beginning of the siege and had gone to relatives at Beilau near Kanth. Here he was captured by the Russians on February 16th, 1945, and remained a prisoner until June 5th, 1945. Together with many other devout Catholics he was obliged to endure hardship and suffering during these months, but, as he himself said, it was with a thankful heart that he saw and experienced truly selfless love and sacrifice. To quote his own words: "At least it was a time of spiritual gain in passive purification for which I am grateful to Our Heavenly Father. And I am especially grateful to Him for a divine Providence, which may sound almost unbelievable. We were huddled together in a cellar, in fear and trembling, one night, when, at the height of our great distress a young Russian officer suddenly entered and protected the womenfolk and saved my life. This young man, with his pure brow, his candid eyes, and the badge of Christ on his uniform, showed me that there are still young people in Russia who, despite

¹⁵¹ A detailed account by Bishop Ferche of his expulsion is contained in Kaps, *Beitraege zur Geschichte des Erzbistums Breslau in den Schicksalsjahren 1945/50*, Vol I, p. 28 ff. (6 Vols) Munich, 1950. (Quoted in following footnotes as *Beitraege*) For an account of his experiences in Breslau under Polish administration, see *Beitraege*, loc. cit., Vol. II, p. 115 ff.

the godless regime of the past thirty years, believe in Christ." — After Germany's capitulation the Provost returned to Breslau and stayed there until he was expelled from the country on July 1st, 1947, together with the Breslau Ursulines, who had for a time sheltered the cathedral-chapter. The Ursulines were able to rent the castle of Herdringen near Arnsberg in Westphalia, and here they devoted themselves to charity work for young people. At their invitation Provost Blaeschke went there at the beginning of February, 1948, and from then onwards until his death he acted as chaplain there. It was at Herdringen that he celebrated his eightieth birthday on November 2nd, 1950, on which occasion many of the Silesian clergy, the local clergy, and the Silesian refugees came to congratulate him.¹⁵² A few weeks later, on November 26th, 1950, the last Sunday of the ecclesiastical year, he passed away, and was buried in Herdringen on November 30th, 1950.

Two other members of the Breslau Cathedral chapter also died after their expulsion from Silesia. Dr. Ludwig Cuno, a member of the chapter and the Papal house-prelate, died very suddenly on August 1st, 1949. It was thanks to his able leadership that the archbishopric was established in Goerlitz. On September 3rd, 1950, Dr. Paul Lukaszczyk, a member of the Breslau Cathedral chapter, died of a seizure in Trebnitz, whither he had gone to convalesce on August 15th, 1950. He was buried there on September 7th, 1950. He had remained in Breslau together with Canon Niedzballa, as they both knew Polish.

After the death of Cardinal Bertram, the Dean of Breslau, Prelate Dr. Ferdinand Piontek, was elected in his absence by the members of the chapter as vicar-capitular of the archdiocese of Breslau (July, 1945). He arrived in the city on foot a few days later and assumed the office of administering the archdiocese under conditions which surely had never been so tragic in the whole of the thousand years' history of the diocese. After his expulsion from Breslau in 1946 Prelate Piontek transferred his seat to Goerlitz.¹⁵³

At the beginning of 1952 the other six surviving members of the Breslau Cathedral chapter were either in various parts of Germany, or members of the diocesan administrative body in Goerlitz, either as pastors or as teachers.

¹⁵² Cf. Kaps *Der Dompropst von Breslau*, p. 20.

¹⁵³ Cf. chapter on the administration of the Catholic Church in the archdiocese of Breslau.

c) *The fate of the Breslau diocesan priests*

On January 1, 1945, there were about 1,600 secular priests in the archdiocese of Breslau, the largest German diocese. When the Russian armies began to approach the Silesian frontier and the first lot of refugee treks from the Warthe district arrived in Silesia the Silesian clergymen received instructions from the archiepiscopal court in Breslau to remain in their parishes and not leave them unless the parishioners were evacuated. Thus, the priests of Silesia for the most part shared the fate of their parishioners. As was the case elsewhere in the east, many of the priests in Silesia lost their lives during the Russian invasion. Whereas up to the year 1945 on an average about forty secular priests died every year in the archdiocese of Breslau, in 1945, the year of the Russian invasion of Silesia, the number of deaths among the 1,600 secular priests amounted to 125. Seventy-two of them were murdered and died as martyrs for their faith, because they refused to desert their parishioners and tried to protect them, in particular the women and girls.¹⁵⁴

The Martyrdom of Silesian Priests 1945/46 is a lasting tribute to the self-sacrificing spirit of the Silesian priests who died as martyrs for their fellow-countrymen during the tragic times which Germany suffered at the end of World War II. The book contains eyewitness accounts of the death of 103 Silesian priests, who were either murdered or died as a result of the brutal treatment and cruelty they were subjected to.¹⁵⁵ As a supplement to *The Martyrdom of Silesian Priests 1945/46* the documentary section of this book contains a number of eyewitness accounts hitherto unpublished. It is therefore not necessary to go into further details at this point.¹⁵⁶ These accounts give the reader an insight into the ghastly and inhuman

¹⁵⁴ Cf *The Martyrdom of Silesian Priests 1945/46. loc cit*, pp 8-9

¹⁵⁵ See *Bayerisches Klerusblatt*, No 24, 1950

¹⁵⁶ To give a short account of the fate of Vicar Prietzel of Breslau-Lissa — he and his sister, sister-in-law, and maid, as well as the Protestant vicar, Reverend Michalke, and a number of young people of both confessions, were arrested at half-past twelve at night, on October 23rd, 1946, by drunken Polish militia-men. Whilst searching Vicar Prietzel's house Polish militia had allegedly found a revolver, which, incidentally, he had never possessed, hidden in the upholstery of a chair. He was most brutally beaten and mishandled on the way to the prison in Graupen Street, in Breslau, and also whilst detained there. After they had been interrogated and ill-treated for weeks on end, his relatives and Vicar Michalke were released and sent to the British Zone of Germany. Vicar Prietzel and two young men were sentenced to a lengthy term of imprisonment for "possession of firearms". The Vicar was later taken to the prison at Naugart near Stettin, in Pomerania, and, despite all efforts to obtain his release, died there on September 20th, 1951 (Further details are contained in *Beitrag*, Vol III, p 62, and also in the information which the author received from various members of the Vicar's former parish.)

atrocities perpetrated in Eastern Germany at the end of the war and afterwards, and reveal the dreadful misery caused by men when they rebel against the natural order of things and against God's Commandments. They are a solemn warning to all mankind that a world which is godless scorns man's rights and privileges, disregards the laws of humanity, and inevitably brings about its own destruction.¹⁵⁷ Most of the Silesian priests who, in the spring of 1945, together with their parishioners left their parishes, returned there after the war was over. At the end of 1945 the majority of Silesian secular priests were in Silesia as can be seen from the following statistics regarding the number of secular clergymen in the archdiocese of Breslau on December 31, 1945.

Secular clergy in Upper Silesia (natives)	415
(about 120 of them could only speak German)	
Immigrant Polish clergy	approx. 150
Secular clergy in Lower Silesia, east of the Lusatian Neisse (natives)	465
(about 20 of them could speak Polish)	
Immigrant Polish clergy	approx. 150
Secular clergy in the Czech part of the archdiocese of Breslau (natives)	115
(of these 45 were German, 9 were Germans from the Reich)	
Secular clergy in the Brandenburg district of the archdiocese of Breslau (natives)	7
Immigrant Polish clergy	7
Secular clergy in Lusatia, west of the Lusatian Neisse (natives)	60 ¹⁵⁸

By the end of 1945 there were only 243 secular priests of the archdiocese of Breslau who had not returned to their home-diocese, either because they had been forcibly expelled or were unable to return because the Poles refused to allow the Silesians who had fled to Western Germany, above all to Saxony, to cross the Oder-Neisse line when they attempted to return to Silesia.

¹⁵⁷ A further source of information in this connection is the collection of *Dokumente der Menschlichkeit*, published by the "Goettingen Arbeitskreis", which give an account of the mass-expulsions carried out Holzner-Verlag, Kitzingen/Main, 1950

¹⁵⁸ Cf *Beiträge*, Vol III, p. 121

d) *The fate of the Silesian monasteries and convents*¹⁵⁹

Despite the dangerous situation all the members of religious orders had remained in Silesia, with the exception of some of the younger members who had been evacuated to the west. The nuns were indeed ministering angels not only during the siege of Breslau¹⁶⁰, but also in the hospitals and air-raid shelters throughout the province. Many of the nuns were subjected to dreadful atrocities by the enemy and many of them died as martyrs.¹⁶¹ Despite all hardships, dangers, and privations, they helped and relieved the poor and distressed during these long months of suffering; they sheltered and cared for refugees and expellees and provided them with food which they had, for the most part, been obliged to beg from the inhabitants of neighbouring villages.¹⁶² During the typhus epidemic which raged throughout the country in 1945 and 1946 they nursed the sick, many of whom lay crowded together in makeshift quarters. It was inevitable that many of the nuns contracted the disease themselves, since it was often impossible for them to take the necessary precautions as medical supplies and disinfectants were extremely scarce, most of them having been looted. During the years of 1945 and 1946 countless Silesian nuns died as a result of the hardships they endured, overwork, inadequate food, and the effects of the war.¹⁶³

3) *Silesia under Polish Administration*

Soon after the Russian invasion of Silesia and prior to the military capitulation of Germany the Poles took over the civil administration in many parts of Silesia. In those districts which were still in the hands of the Germans at the time of the capitulation, they took over soon after this event. The German population, and in particular the Catholics, hoped that conditions would improve with the coming of the Poles, but they were sadly disappointed. The Germans were

¹⁵⁹ For details on the fate of the monasteries and convents at Leubus, Kamenz, Heinrichau, Trebnitz, and Gruessau, etc. see Kaps, *Heilige Heimat*, loc. cit., p. 24 f, and *Gruessauer Gedenkbuch*, loc. cit.

¹⁶⁰ Cf. *Beitraege*, Vol. IV, p. 253 ff.

¹⁶¹ See *Beitraege*, Vol. IV, pp. 248-249, 288. In Ottmuth four nuns and the Mother Superior were shot dead by Russians because they refused to let the latter rape them.

¹⁶² See *Beitraege*, Vol. IV, p. 240. When the Russians captured Wohlau the nuns of St. Joseph's Convent there took in and sheltered all the inhabitants of Wohlau, about a hundred old people, who had remained behind in the village. Many of these persons died whilst at the convent. One of the nuns who had been ill-treated by Russians also died.

¹⁶³ In one of the sisterhoods in Upper and Lower Silesia there were 159 deaths in 1945 and 51 deaths in 1946. Twenty-seven of the nuns who died were murdered, nine died as a result of maltreatment, twenty-five of typhus, and forty-two as a result of exposure, exhaustion, and other effects of the war. (See *Beitraege*, Vol. IV, p. 256.)

deprived of their rights and their property, and treated like criminals. As had already happened previously in Upper Silesia, the inhabitants of many of the towns and villages in Lower Silesia were placed in camps, detained there, and then finally expelled from the country and sent to Western Germany. In this connection it must be stressed that the expulsion of the Germans by the Poles was already in progress before the Potsdam Conference.¹⁶⁴

The population of Silesia and the East German territories set all their hopes on the Potsdam Conference, at which the United States of America were represented by Harry S. Truman, Soviet Russia by J. W. Stalin, and Great Britain by Winston S. Churchill and Clement R. Attlee. During the Crimean (Yalta) Conference (February 4th to 11th, 1945) the question of the new Polish frontiers had already been decided, by which Germany's interests were greatly prejudiced, but the majority of Germans were unaware of this fact. The decision had been reached at Yalta to set up a strong, free, and independent Poland, and the three heads of government considered that "the Eastern frontier of Poland should follow the Curzon Line with digressions from it in some regions of five to eight kilometres in favour of Poland." They recognized that "Poland must receive substantial accessions of territory in the North and the West." They held the view that "the opinion of the new Polish Provisional Government of National Unity should be sought in due course on the extent of these accessions and that the final delimitation of the Western frontier of Poland should thereafter await the Peace Conference."¹⁶⁵ The Potsdam Conference ended on August 2nd, 1945. As regards the western frontier of Poland, Section IX of the Potsdam Agreement contained the following decision: "In conformity with the agreement on Poland reached at the Crimea Conference the three Heads of Government have sought the opinion of the Polish Provisional Government of National Unity in regard to the accession of territory in the north and west which Poland should receive. The President of the National Council of Poland and members of the Polish Provisional Government of National Unity have been received at the Conference and have fully presented their views. The three Heads of Government reaffirm their opinion that the final delimitation of the western frontier of Poland should await the peace settlement.

¹⁶⁴ The systematic expulsion of the Germans from Hindenburg was effected as early as July 24, 1945 (cf *Beitraege*, Vol II, p 821), and in some districts even earlier Cf chapter on the expulsion of the population of Silesia in 1945.

¹⁶⁵ Cf *Europa-Archiv*, p 345, 1946/47. — Dr. Friedrich Hoffmann, *Die Oder-Neisse-Linie, Politische Entwicklung und voelkerrechtliche Lage* Verlag J Henrich, Frankfort on Main, 1949.

The three Heads of Government agree that, pending the final determination of Poland's western frontier, the former German territories east of a line running from the Baltic Sea immediately west of Swinemuende, and thence along the Oder River to the confluence of the western Neisse River and along the Western Neisse to the Czechoslovak frontier, including that portion of East Prussia not placed under the administration of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in accordance with the understanding reached at this conference and including the area of the former free city of Danzig, shall be under the administration of the Polish State and for such purposes should not be considered as part of the Soviet zone of occupation in Germany." Article XIII of the Potsdam Agreement was worded as follows: "Orderly Transfers of German Populations. The conference reached the following agreement on the removal of Germans from Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary.

The three Governments, having considered the question in all its aspects, recognize that the transfer to Germany of German populations, or elements thereof, remaining in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, will have to be undertaken. They agree that any transfers that take place should be effected in an orderly and humane manner."¹⁶⁶

The Potsdam Agreement was signed by J. W. Stalin, Harry S. Truman, and C. R. Attlee, but not by any French representative.

It is not necessary to go into details on the subject of the Potsdam Agreement for the simple reason that Poland cannot claim any rights as far as the population of Silesia and East Germany is concerned on the strength of this Agreement. Poland, as mentioned in Article XIII of the Agreement can, in the legal constitutional sense, only be taken to mean Poland according to the frontiers of September 1st, 1939, but not the actual expansion of its territory as an Occupation Power. Thus, according to the Potsdam Agreement, the only expulsion of Germans permissible was that of those persons who were domiciled within the Polish frontiers of September 1st, 1939. The Agreement contains no clause to the effect that the expulsion of Reichs German subjects from the eastern German territory occupied by the Poles, namely east of the Oder and the Neisse, was permissible.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁶ Cf. *Europa-Archiv*, loc. cit., p. 219 ff

¹⁶⁷ As regards this question in general and in particular the principles of international law as applied to the subject of the expulsions, see *Ostwaerts der Oder und Neisse*, p. 89 ff (Wissenschaftliche Verlagsanstalt KG, Hannover, 1949), where it is stated that the expulsion of the inhabitants of these districts was a serious violation of international law. See also Rudolf Laun, *Das Recht auf Heimat*, p. 18 ff in particular. H. Schroedel-Verlag, Hannover-Darmstadt, 1951

Actually, Poland violated the terms of the Agreement by treating East Germany as part of Poland and continuing the expulsion of the Germans, which had begun prior to the Agreement, to an ever-increasing degree afterwards, in order to establish a fait accompli under Russia's protection. The other two signatories to the Potsdam Agreement, the United States of America and Great Britain, never acknowledged that Poland was justified in acting thus, and pointed out on numerous occasions that the eastern German territories had only been temporarily assigned to the Soviet Union and Poland until a final decision be reached at the peace conference.¹⁶⁸

4) *The Holy See and the Distress of the Population in East Germany*

After the occupation of Silesia by the Russians and the assumption of the civil administration by the Poles throughout Silesia and as far as the Goerlitz Neisse in the summer of 1945, subsequent to the Potsdam Conference, the sufferings and distress of the population increased from day to day as a result of the atrocities, looting, raping, and expulsion, to which they were subjected. Catholics and Protestants alike could frequently be heard expressing the following views: "Does the Pope know how terrible conditions are in East Germany? He should be informed and should appeal to the world to help and stir its conscience so that it takes action against the perpetrators of atrocities in East Germany." This is not the time and place to discuss what measures were taken to inform the highest ecclesiastical authorities of conditions in East Germany. The Pope certainly was officially informed of the terrible conditions, the famine, and the expulsion of the German population in East Germany.

The Famine in East Germany¹⁶⁹

When the fortress of Breslau surrendered to the enemy on May 6th, 1945, two days before Germany's capitulation, in order to avoid more unnecessary bloodshed, there were still sufficient food supplies available in Breslau and in the other districts of Silesia, which the Red Army now occupied, to feed the population of Silesia. In addition, the land had been tilled and planted in the districts so far not

¹⁶⁸ The former US. Foreign Secretary, James F. Byrnes, in his book, *Speaking Frankly*. Publ. 1947. For extracts from this book, see *Offen gesagt* . . . , p. 30 ff. Publ. by the *Neue Zeitung*, Munich. See also *New York Herald Tribune*, No. 52, of March 1, 1947, and the publication, *The Land of the Dead*. Ed. by the Committee against Mass Expulsion New York, 1947. — Prof. A. J. App, "Friedensgrundlagen", "Hungerpolitik", and "Frauenschaendung", compiled and edited by the Boniface Press, Philadelphia, Pa. — Father E. J. Reichenberger, *Europa in Truennern*, p. 127 ff, in particular. Verlag A. Pustet, Graz-Salzburg-Vienna, 1950.

¹⁶⁹ The following account is based on official ecclesiastical reports of October 10, 1945 (*Beitraege*, Vol VI)

occupied by the Russians. As regards the districts which were already occupied by the enemy, many of the inhabitants who had been evacuated had returned there soon after the occupation, and it was thus possible to sow potatoes and summer-cereals. In view of the fact that the weather was extremely favourable in 1945 the food question should therefore have presented no problem, but unfortunately the hopes and expectations of the population in this respect were dashed to the ground.

It was not long before practically all the live-stock in Silesia was seized by the occupation troops and taken east. In a large village in the Neustadt/Upper Silesia district (Leuber), for instance, there were only twenty head of cattle left by the beginning of June, 1945, as compared to a former stock of 1,026 horned cattle. Supplies of cereals and foodstuffs, including seed-crops, were confiscated by the occupation forces and also by the Poles when they took over the civil administration of Silesia. In addition, the private food supplies of the population were to a very considerable extent destroyed in the course of the looting which was carried out. Agricultural machines and implements were likewise confiscated by the Russians soon after they occupied Silesia. Owing to the fact that the Poles refused to allow the Silesians who had been evacuated prior to the Russian invasion to cross the Lusatian Neisse and return to Silesia, there was a considerable shortage of agricultural workers, and the summer-sowing was thus rendered practically impossible. The harvest of 1945 was also confiscated by the Russians, regardless of the needs of the civilian population, and no measures whatsoever were introduced to ensure that the population received adequate foodrations. In view of all these facts it was therefore not surprising that a famine gradually began to make itself felt.

The meagre, private supplies of food, in particular of potatoes, which the people had stored up, had gradually been exhausted. There had been no regular allocation of foodrations to the German population in Breslau and other towns since the capitulation. The working population had occasionally received a small allocation, but this had never included fats or milk. The people of Breslau tried to remedy the situation by gathering potatoes out of the storage-pits in the outlying districts of the city, and some of them would even tramp as far as twenty miles in order to obtain a little food. As a rule, however, they were deprived by Polish marauders of what little supplies of food or potatoes they had managed to obtain, before they reached the city. To make matters worse, there were no new potatoes to be had once the supplies of old potatoes were exhausted.

All this finally resulted in a famine which claimed many victims. In Breslau, for instance, where the number of Germans who had remained behind was about 300,000, it has been officially ascertained that more than ninety per cent of the babies, a very large percentage of infants, many young mothers and old persons died of starvation. As a result of the shortage of fats, dysentery broke out and claimed many victims, all the more so as the medical supplies which had not been confiscated or stolen were soon exhausted. Since the dispensaries usually only sold their goods in exchange for zloty (Polish currency), the majority of Germans were not in a position to buy any medical supplies. For the same reason it was practically impossible for them to obtain hospital treatment as a deposit of 200 zloty (in Breslau, for instance,) had to be paid upon admission to a hospital. The Germans were obliged to sell the few possessions they had managed to save, such as linen, clothing, electric stoves, jewelry, etc., to the Poles in order to obtain zloty with which to buy a little food.¹⁷⁰ It must be remembered that from May 8th onwards the Germans had been obliged to get along without receiving any Polish money (in the form of wage or salary) and without any official allocations of food rations. The misery and distress of the population in the towns was indescribable. The rural population was slightly better off since there were still some potatoes available in the storage-pits and the harvest could be gathered in both in the summer and autumn of 1945. Germans who worked for the Russians and Poles during the harvest received a little bread and soup as pay.

It is obvious that, under such circumstances, many persons were at their wit's end. The number of suicides increased at an alarming rate; in fact, there would have been even more suicides in Breslau had the gas supply been available.

The same conditions with slight variations also prevailed in the remaining German eastern territories under Polish administration. Famine raged throughout the country. The Poles were able to buy food in Polish shops, whereas the Germans, on the other hand, could not do so and were obliged to try and live by black-market transactions. The death-rate was as high in these territories as in Silesia, especially as regards small children.

The ecclesiastical authorities in Silesia did everything in their power to alleviate these dreadful conditions. On numerous occasions

¹⁷⁰ The Germans often exchanged German money for Polish zloty, but the rate of exchange was high and fluctuated considerably (sometimes they received 200 zloty for 100 marks, on other occasions only 100 zloty) The price of a pound of butter, for example, was 180 zloty

representatives of the Catholic and the Protestant Church, including Bishop Ferche and the heads of the Catholic charity institutions, appealed to the competent authorities to introduce emergency measures immediately in order to overcome the famine, and begged them to issue milk-rations for babies and infants and supply the parish-priests with foodrations to enable them to run the parish canteens which had been set up everywhere for the starving population. The competent authorities in question, namely the Polish president of Breslau (the chief mayor) and the Russian commanding officer of Breslau, thereupon declared that they were not in a position to place food supplies at the disposal of the German population. The Russian general in command in Silesia, who had his headquarters at Liegnitz and whom the Church authorities were advised to approach in this matter, refused to receive the ecclesiastical representatives, despite countless efforts on their part to obtain an audience.

The Expulsion of the Population of Silesia in 1945¹⁷¹

On May 15th, 1945, a few days after the capitulation of Breslau, Bishop Adamski, the Catholic Polish bishop of Katowice, arrived in Breslau and informed the deputizing vicar-general of the Primate of Breslau, Cardinal Dr. Bertram, who had been at Castle Johannesburg in Jauernig (Czechoslovakia) since January, 1945, that from the point of view of the Polish government authorities, there could be no question of there being any minorities in the territories occupied by Poland. Breslau and Stettin, he added, would become Polish, the Polish population of the town of Lemberg and also the university there would be transferred to Breslau, the Polish population of the town of Wilno and the university there would be transferred to Stettin, and about four and a half million Poles from the Polish eastern territories would be re-settled in the territory west of the Oder. In conclusion, he pointed out that the sooner the Germans left these territories of their own free will and went to Western Germany, the better it would be for them.

At that time this information seemed almost incredible. Soon afterwards, however, it became evident that the Poles were resorting to every possible means in order to forcibly evict the Germans from the German territories in the east which were now under Polish administration. It was obvious that Poland aimed to establish a fait accompli, as far as these districts were concerned, prior to the

¹⁷¹ The following data is based on official ecclesiastical reports of October 10, 1945 (*Beitraege*, Vol. VI)

general peace conference which was to be held. For this reason, too, persons who had been evacuated by the German authorities at the beginning of 1945 were not allowed to return to their native towns and villages in the eastern German territories. Several members of the archiepiscopal vicariate-general in Breslau, for instance, waited in Goerlitz in vain for permission from the Poles to return to Silesia and Breslau.

The following facts serve to give the reader some idea of the extent of the expulsions carried out in Silesia after the capitulation. According to printed bulletins issued by the municipal authorities of Goerlitz the number of persons seeking to return to Silesia who had arrived in Goerlitz and environs by the middle of June, 1945, amounted to 60,000. Similar conditions prevailed in the towns located in the districts between Goerlitz, Loebau, and Bautzen. Despite the fact that placards had been affixed in all the villages and along all the highways leading to Goerlitz, warning persons intending to return home to turn back, swarms of persons trekked onwards every day in an attempt to reach the bridges across the River Neisse. Many of them had come from the Sudetenland whither they had been evacuated and which they had now been forced to leave. They had been told there that there were no obstacles to prevent their return home to Upper and Lower Silesia and that they would be conveyed by special refugee-trains from the frontier to their native towns and villages. The disappointment of those who wanted to return home can well be imagined when none of these promises materialized and they discovered, on the contrary, that they were confronted by unexpected difficulties and obstacles.¹⁷²

By the second half of June, 1945, the situation in the districts along the Goerlitz Neisse had gone from bad to worse. On June 21st, 1945, the Polish commander issued an order that the eastern district of Goerlitz (on the right bank of the Neisse) was to be evacuated by the German population immediately. Thousands of inhabitants hurriedly gathered a few of their possessions together and fled to those districts of Goerlitz located on the opposite bank of the river.¹⁷³ A few days later the German inhabitants of the neighbouring villages on the right bank of the Neisse were expelled by the Poles, and Goerlitz was thus deprived of its main agricultural supply-areas. Soon afterwards expulsion measures were also enforced in the neighbour-

¹⁷² Cf also documentary section, Report No. 2.

¹⁷³ That is to say, prior to the Potsdam Conference which ended on August 2nd, 1945.

ing districts, and refugees fled from Silesia, across the Neisse and into Saxony in a never-ending trek.

At the beginning of July, 1945, crowds of Silesians who had been expelled by the Poles from the districts and towns of Glogau, Freystadt, Sagan, Sorau, and Sommerfeld, and also from Liegnitz (the Germans were expelled from this town on June 27th, 1945), Hirschberg, Breslau, and various districts in Upper Silesia passed through Forst and swarmed into Lower Lusatia. According to information received from the vicar of Cottbus, 20,000 refugees arrived there every day during the first weeks of July. The treks also included many Catholic and Protestant clergymen, who had very often been forced to leave their homes within half an hour's time. The refugees who arrived in Cottbus were absolutely destitute and had, as a rule, been deprived of their last possessions at the frontier by Polish marauders. At the end of July, 1945, to make matters even worse, there was another influx of refugees into the Cottbus district, namely the Sudeten Germans who had been expelled in the same drastic manner. Their treks had simply been diverted from Dresden to Cottbus, where the situation was already one of indescribable distress owing to the vast number of refugees, who had arrived there in the course of the month. From Cottbus these treks were then diverted to Luckau, Luebben, and later, to Mecklenburg. In addition, thousands of Silesians who had been obliged to leave Saxony and, unaware of conditions in Silesia, were now intending to return home, also arrived in Lusatia. And, finally, about the middle of August, thousands of prisoners-of-war, who had been released because they were not fit for work, also arrived there and discovered that there was no chance of their being allowed to return home.

From June 23rd, 1945, onwards expulsion measures were also enforced in Saxony, and the inhabitants of the villages on the right bank of the Neisse which belonged to the district of Zittau were ordered to leave their homes by the Polish occupation authorities, — usually within two hours' time.

After the expulsion of the Reichs Germans from the Sudetenland the Sudeten Germans who had been domiciled there all their lives were now also ruthlessly expelled. According to press and radio reports the expulsion of the three million Sudeten Germans in the country was to be effected over a period of one and a half years, but what actually happened was quite the contrary, and they were taken by surprise and forced to leave the country immediately. Even the members of the cathedral-chapter and the diocesan court at Leitmeritz were expelled in this manner.

The fact that the Germans in Upper Silesia were forcibly expelled has already been mentioned. The people of East Germany hoped in vain that expulsion measures would be suspended and, failing this, that the expulsions would at least be effected in a more humane manner. On the contrary, however, the Poles, no doubt encouraged by the decisions reached at the Potsdam Conference, enforced expulsion measures to an ever-increasing degree and in the same inhuman manner, even in the autumn of 1945.

The position of the refugees was, in short, tragic. Evacuees who, after the end of the war, trudged along the highways for weeks, reached their home towns and villages only to be expelled by the Poles.¹⁷⁴

By the middle of June, 1945, there was a serious shortage of food supplies in Goerlitz. The only rations issued to the inhabitants consisted of two pounds of bread and a small quantity of potatoes per week, but no fats or butter. And people were obliged to stand in long queues to obtain these meagre rations. During the first week of July, 1945, the inhabitants of Goerlitz are said to have received only half a pound of bread per head. Refugees received no food rations whatsoever. In view of the food shortage the inhabitants of the towns were not in a position to help the refugees, and the latter were forced to beg food from the occupation forces, etc. Some of them even resorted to stealing food, and many of them plucked grass, cooked it, and then ate it.

Public notices had been affixed in most of the towns and villages to the effect that refugees who stayed there longer than twenty-four hours were liable to punishment. The refugees were thus forced to keep moving from one place to another with no fixed destination. One week, for instance, they would trek from Goerlitz to Zittau, and the following week from Zittau back to Goerlitz again. As a result, and owing to the fact that they were completely undernourished most of the refugees grew weaker and weaker from day to day, and, indeed, many of them died of exhaustion. Many of them were inadequately clothed — hardly any of them had any warm winter-wear — since they had been robbed again and again by the Russians and the Poles. And their funds, too, gradually began to run low.

¹⁷⁴ To state but a single case known to the author, which is typical of thousands of cases, — a family which included five children, ranging in age from four months to eight years old, trekked on foot from the Sudetenland to Liegnitz, a distance of 169 miles, then back again on foot as far as the Neisse, a distance of 63 miles, and so on. In the course of their trek they were robbed again and again by marauders, and the women lived in constant fear and trembling of what might happen to them. The inevitable result of all this was, of course, physical and mental exhaustion.

Medical care and treatment was completely inadequate and, for the most part, not available. In the vicinity of Ostritz, for instance, a woman gave birth to a baby in a cornfield. The nearest hospital was in Gronau, which was occupied by the Poles who had blocked the bridge leading into the town. The hospitals in Goerlitz (12 $\frac{1}{2}$ miles away) and Zittau (11 $\frac{1}{4}$ miles away) were overcrowded. There were no ambulances available. Child-mortality was extremely high. The largest number of deaths occurred among babies. Many small children under three years of age also died as they were undernourished and not equal to the hardships they had to endure. There were hardly any medical supplies available, and what little there were could only be obtained on a doctor's prescription. The death-rate was appallingly high.

Sanitary conditions were, on the whole, indescribable. People were constantly in danger of contracting diseases. The public authorities, above all in the towns, had hastily set up emergency collecting camps for the refugees when the latter began to arrive. In Cottbus¹⁷⁵, for instance, a camp of this kind had been set up in a partly demolished factory, which had a concrete floor and no windows. Hundreds of persons squatted on the bare floor and lived on soup which they boiled on wood-fires, built up on stacks of bricks in the factory-yard. Under these circumstances it is not to be wondered at that the majority of refugees were either completely indifferent to their fate or else reduced to utter despair. Practically all of them had lost their entire property and possessions as well as their means of earning a livelihood. Most of them viewed the future despondently, and only very few of them had the energy to try and find some new means of earning a living.

As a result of these conditions it was well-nigh impossible for the clergy to alleviate the mental anguish of the refugees. All they could do in the distressed areas was to give the last sacraments to the dying and bury the dead. Most of them were broken-hearted at the dreadful misery and suffering which they could in no way remedy, and many of them were on the verge of a physical and nervous collapse.¹⁷⁶

In a personal letter of November 1st, 1945, to the German bishops the Pope expressed his deep sympathy with all those in distress in

¹⁷⁵ The author himself personally experienced conditions in Cottbus at the end of August, 1945.

¹⁷⁶ Cf. *Beitraege*, Vol VI, addenda 1 and 2 of the report, "Romreise eines schlesischen Priesters 1945".

Germany.¹⁷⁷ He wrote as follows: "We who share your sorrows and cares wish to express our heartfelt sympathy for all those persons living in Berlin and East Germany. We know how very tragic their fate is and we can picture the dreadful desolation which the last stages of the war and its aftermath have brought to the prosperous provinces, towns, and villages. We deeply deplore the insults and inhuman treatment to which many of the German women and girls have been subjected. And just as we suffer with those who are in bodily and mental distress in the eastern and western countries of the world, in Europe, Asia, and Africa, as a result of the dreadful war, so, too, we feel a deep sorrow in our hearts because of all the misery which the war has brought upon you, you, with whom we have spent so many years in truly fruitful collaboration and whose living and eager faith we have experienced at the Catholic Congresses in Berlin, Breslau, and Magdeburg. We pray to Our Holy Father to show His mercy to the members of all your dioceses and, above all, to those unhappy souls who have been deprived of their homes and have no shelter. We shall do all in our power to alleviate your distress, especially as regards your subsistence. It is our sincerest wish that all the paternal prayers we have offered up for you may be heard and your burden lightened.

Since we are well aware of all the tragic events which have occurred in East Germany during the past months we urgently exhort all mankind not to avenge violence with violence, but to act and judge in justice and without prejudice, and, in dealing with those who really are guilty and must be punished, to spare the middle classes who, in your country as elsewhere, are not to blame for the war and are guilty of no crime.¹⁷⁸ May the Catholic faith which is professed by so many persons on both sides serve to extinguish the fire of hatred and overcome the hostility which prevails everywhere and may it pave the way to forgiveness and love. This is our exhortation to mankind, our hope, our prayer, and our desire."

But the solemn words of warning uttered by the Pope went unheeded. During the years of 1945 and 1946 millions of persons in East Germany, including thousands of Catholic priests and members of religious orders, were forced to leave their native province. It was to them that Pope Pius XII addressed the words he wrote on June 29th, 1946: "We exhort all our dearly beloved sons and daughters

¹⁷⁷ Cf. *Amtsblatt der Erzdioezese Muenchen und Freising*, No 1, of January 20th, 1946.

¹⁷⁸ With these words the Pope was the first person who, in the face of the world, refuted the lie about the collective guilt of the German nation.

who have been forced to leave their country under such tragic circumstances not to waver in their faith in God Who in His Infinite Power and Love wills even troubles for the best. In paternal sympathy we grant them our Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of the infinite compassion of the Redeemer."¹⁷⁹

5) *Ecclesiastical Conditions in Silesia after Germany's Capitulation on May 8th, 1945*

a) *The administration of the Catholic Church in the archdiocese of Breslau*

On July 16th, 1945, within a week of hearing of the death of Cardinal Bertram, the Primate of Breslau, on July 6th, at Castle Johannesberg near Jauernig, and learning that the episcopal see of Breslau had thus become vacant¹⁸⁰, the members of the chapter of Breslau Cathedral assembled in order to elect the vicar-capitular.¹⁸¹ The election was held at the Ursuline convent in Breslau, where the majority of the canons who had remained in the city during the siege had found a refuge after the building in which the diocesan court had formerly been housed was demolished. On the day of the election the Polish mayor of the city sent for Bishop Ferche and the last vicar-general, Dr. Negwer, and informed them that the Polish Government wanted the members of the cathedral-chapter to elect a Pole as vicar-capitular. Bishop Ferche and Dr. Negwer, however, gave the Polish mayor no assurance that this request would be complied with, but pointed out to him that the majority of the inhabitants and clergy in the archdiocese of Breslau were Germans and that they would therefore see no reason to elect a Pole as vicar-capitular.¹⁸² The Dean of Breslau, Papal Prelate Dr. Ferdinand Piontek, was then unanimously elected as vicar-capitular by the metropolitan chapter. He was not in Breslau at the time, but learnt of his election when he arrived there on July 23rd, 1945, after a dangerous and tedious journey on foot. On July 24th, 1945, he entered upon his office as vicar-capitular, for which he was particularly fitted since he spoke Polish fluently

¹⁷⁹ Together with a picture of the Pope. Printed by the Verlag der Kirchen-Hilfsstelle, Munich, 1946

¹⁸⁰ *Codex Juris Canonici (CJC)*, cc. 432 ff., c. 35

¹⁸¹ Owing to the fact that the Germans in Silesia were not allowed to make use of any means of transportation or mail service at that time, the diocesan court in Breslau did not hear of the death of Cardinal Bertram until three days later. The news was brought by messengers who were obliged to proceed on foot from Jauernig to Breslau, a distance of about 63 miles. For this reason the Cardinal's funeral was postponed until July 11th, 1945

¹⁸² Cf. *Beitraege*, Vol II, p. 11.

and was also well-acquainted with the archdiocese and the clergy there as a result of his long administrative activity as a member of the diocesan court.¹⁸³

On August 21st, 1945, the members of the chapter of Breslau Cathedral learnt from the Polish press that the Primate of Poland, Cardinal Hlond, Archbishop of Poznan and Gnesen, had appointed Polish apostolic administrators for the occupied German eastern territories, including three clergymen who were to hold office in the archdiocese of Breslau. These were, Dr. Kominek for Upper Silesia, with Oppeln as his seat, Dr. Milik for Lower Silesia, with Breslau as his seat, and Dr. Nowicki for that district of the Brandenburg part of the archdiocese which was now under Polish administration, with his seat in Landsberg on the Warthe.¹⁸⁴ The apostolic administrators, who were Polish subjects, entered upon their office on September 1st, 1945, and, in accordance with the instructions they had received from Cardinal Hlond, they immediately set up their own ecclesiastical administrative system, employing Polish officials and introducing Polish as the official language. The German diocesan administrative authority which had so far had numerous functions was thus gradually forced to discontinue its activity. Actually, the archdiocese of Breslau was now divided up into the following five administrative areas: the three apostolic administrative districts of Breslau, Oppeln, and Landsberg on the Warthe, under the three Polish administrators, the Czechoslovakian diocesan district, and the so-called Goerlitz part of the archdiocese of Breslau, which was the only district to remain under the unrestricted jurisdiction of the vicar-capitular, Dr. Piontek, who was, however, deprived of the jurisdiction of the other four aforesaid diocesan districts.

After the above-mentioned Polish apostolic administrators took over the administration of the diocesan district of Breslau east of the Oder and the Neisse on September 1st, 1945, Dr. Piontek remained in Breslau until he was expelled from the city by the Poles in 1946. He then made Goerlitz his seat and from here he administered the diocesan district of Breslau west of the Oder and the Neisse, a district

¹⁸³ Born on November 5th, 1878, in Leobschuetz, Upper Silesia, ordained priest on June 20th, 1903, installed as a resident canon of the Cathedral in Breslau on October 9th, 1921, and as Dean of the Cathedral on March 1st, 1939 Cf Kaps, *Handbuch fuer das katholische Schlesien*, p 20

¹⁸⁴ On September 1st, 1945, the Polish administrators, Dr Kominek and Dr Milik, arrived in Breslau and presented their deeds of appointment to the assembly of the members of the cathedral-chapter. These documents had been made out by Cardinal Hlond and were dated August 15th, 1945. The administrator of the district of Landsberg on the Warthe, Dr Nowicki, did not present his deed of appointment until March 30th, 1946 Cf *Beitraege*, Vol. III, p 110.

which comprises about 4,247 square miles and is larger in area than many a German diocese, e.g. Aachen, Eichstaett, or Passau.¹⁸⁵ The vicar-capitular was vested with the rights of a resident bishop by the Pope, and also with the right to administer the religious rites of confirmation and to ordain clergymen and admit priests to holy orders.¹⁸⁶

The Polish apostolic administrators appointed by Cardinal Hlond (in Breslau, Oppeln, Landsberg on the Warthe, for the diocese of Breslau, as well as in Oliva for the diocese of Danzig, and in Allenstein for the diocese of Ermland) were not officially recognized by the Polish State since the Polish Concordat was revoked by Poland on September 12th, 1945. They were, however, on the whole allowed to continue in office until the beginning of the year 1950.

It became more and more evident in the course of time that the Polish state was aiming to reorganize the temporary ecclesiastical administration of the occupied territories. In order to intimidate the Polish bishops, Poland and the Polish occupied German eastern territories adopted an attitude of hostility towards the Catholic Church which became more and more obvious from the beginning of 1950 onwards¹⁸⁷ and to which not even an agreement between the Polish bishops and the government on April 14th, 1950, could put an end.¹⁸⁸ The contents of this agreement were so strange and caused so much surprise that they were at first denied in certain quarters, including the *Osservatore Romano*. Later, however, the text which had been published proved to be a true and official version of the decisions reached in this agreement. In Article I, section 3, of the agreement the Polish episcopate declared that economic, traditional, cultural, and religious rights as well as historic justice demanded that the newly-acquired territories should belong to Poland for all time. It was further stated that, in view of the fact that the newly-acquired territories represented an inseparable part of the Polish state, the episcopate would address itself to the Holy See with the request that the ecclesiastical administrative districts, the administrators of which had the rights of resident bishops, should be changed into regular episcopal diocesan courts. In section 4 of the

¹⁸⁵ In this district there are 100 priests working in 53 parishes and independent pastoral offices. Cf *Orts- und Personen-Verzeichnis des Erzbischoeflichen Amtes Goerlitz*, 1950

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid*, p 1, and *Handbuch fuer das katholische Schlesien*, p. 10.

¹⁸⁷ For details cf *Polnischer Pressedienst (PPD)*, No 999/1950 ff. and *Herder-Korrespondenz*, pamphlet No 6/1950 ff

¹⁸⁸ *PPD*, No 1068, of April 17, 1950, and *Herder-Korrespondenz*, pamphlet No 9/1950, p 412 ff, which contain the complete text of the agreement

same Article the episcopate declared that it would do everything within its power to oppose all anti-Polish activity, namely the anti-Polish and revolutionary attitude and behaviour of some of the German clergy.

After the delimitation of the state-frontier between Poland and Germany had been solemnly ratified by Poland and the Soviet Union by the so-called Oder-Neisse Frontier Treaty¹⁸⁹, which was signed on January 27th, 1951, in Frankfort on the Oder, the Polish Government immediately abolished the provisional ecclesiastical administrative areas, as represented by the apostolic administrators, in the German eastern territories under Polish administration, and decreed that they were henceforth "permanent" ecclesiastical institutions.¹⁹⁰

In this way the Polish Government effected its former plan to reorganize the ecclesiastical administrative system in the Polish occupied German territories itself if the bishops failed to do so.¹⁹¹ Indeed, the latter were not in a position to do so, since the Holy See, in accordance with its usual practice, can only reorganize the ecclesiastical administrative system in the Polish occupied territories of East Germany after a final peace treaty has been made with Germany and until such time regards the position of these territories as far as ecclesiastical matters are concerned as a temporary one.¹⁹² The Polish Government, on the other hand, by its decree of January 27th, 1951, forced the apostolic administrators of Breslau, Oppeln, Landsberg on the Warthe, Danzig, and Ermland to leave their administrative areas, and appointed state administrators in their stead. The latter were described by the *Polnischer Pressedienst* as "elected vicars-capitular".¹⁹³ In the interests of the unity of the Church the

¹⁸⁹ PPD, No. 1190, of January 31, 1951, p. 2. On January 27, 1951, the agreement regarding the final delimitation of the state-frontier between Poland and the Soviet Union was signed by the Foreign Secretaries of both countries, Skrzyszewski and Dertinger, in Frankfort on the Oder.

¹⁹⁰ This action on the part of the Polish State is nothing less than a usurpation of ecclesiastical rights, which in the territories in question, as has been proved by the example of Czechoslovakia, can result in the Church being deprived of its true function.

¹⁹¹ Cf. declaration made by the Polish Government on the question of ecclesiastical administration in the occupied territories, in PPD, No. 1190, of January 31, 1951, pp. 1-1b.

¹⁹² Cf. *Herder-Korrespondenz*, pamphlet No. 6/1951.

¹⁹³ The Polish report is worded as follows: "In accordance with the provisions of canonical law vicars-capitular have been elected as diocesan superintendents, namely as follows: vicar-capitular of the diocese of Wrocław (Breslau) Archpresbyter K. Lagosz, vicar-capitular of the diocese of Oppeln Dean E. Kobierzycki, as vicar-capitular in Gorzów (Landsberg) Dean T. Żaluzzkowski, as vicar-capitular in Gdańsk (Danzig) J. Cymanowski, and as vicar-capitular in Olsztyn (Allenstein) for the diocese of Ermland W. Zink, episcopal notary." Cf. PPD, No. 1190, of February 3rd, 1951, p. 1.

Polish Primate, Archbishop Wyszynski, on the strength of his apostolic powers of authority, himself conferred jurisdictional powers on them¹⁹⁴, that is to say, he did not insist that the election be carried out on a sound basis. Whether the election was valid or not is therefore irrelevant. From the point of canonical law the so-called vicars-capitular are actually at present nothing more than apostolic administrators, and the East German dioceses, in the absence of bishops of their own, are thus administered as before by the Holy See, that is to say, by papal mandatories. And even negotiations on the part of Archbishop Wyszynski in Rome in April, 1951, failed to change matters in this respect.¹⁹⁵ The East German dioceses are still listed in the *Papal Yearbook*¹⁹⁶ as German dioceses, just as the German territories east of the Oder-Neisse line, as bound by the frontiers of 1937, are, according to international law, still territories of the German Reich and also recognized as such by the Western Powers.¹⁹⁷ This means that from the point of canonical law there is therefore still one undivided archdiocese of Breslau and no separate dioceses of Oppeln and Landsberg, as declared in the Polish Government decree of January 27th, 1951.¹⁹⁸

b) The position of the Protestant Church in Silesia

At the time of Germany's collapse there were 160 Protestant clergymen in office in Silesia under the administration of the Protestant Church in Breslau.¹⁹⁹ Of these, 130 were in office south of the Oder and 30 north of the Oder. By April 1st, 1946, 800 Silesian pastoral offices had been re-established, that is to say, 90 per cent of the former number, and these Protestant parishes were administered by 300 pastors, 300 curates, and about 800 deaconesses and church elders. Two hundred and thirty Protestant clergymen held pastoral offices east of the Neisse and 70 west of this river.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁴ Cf *Herder-Korrespondenz*, pamphlet No 7/1951, p 306.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid*, No 8/1951, p. 340.

¹⁹⁶ *ANNUARIO PONTIFICIO PER L'ANNO 1951*, Città del Vaticano, Tipografia Poliglotta Vaticana

¹⁹⁷ Cf *Handbuch fuer das katholische Schlesien*, p 10, last sentence in parenthesis

¹⁹⁸ Cf memorandum by the Polish bishops, September 13, 1950 (in *Herder-Korrespondenz*, pamphlet No 3/1950, pp 139, 141), and also provisions of canonical law, according to which the founding, delimitation, union, partition, and abolishment of ecclesiastical provinces and dioceses are matters which may only be decided by the Holy See, namely by the Consistory Senate (cc 215, 248, sections 2 and 3, *CJC*)

¹⁹⁹ Cf Ulrich Bunzel, *Gemeinde- und Heimatbuch der evangelischen Schlesier*, Pt. I, p 102. Goslar, 1950

²⁰⁰ *Ibid*, p 109.

The administration of the Protestant Church was unanimously agreed upon at the Silesian provincial synod held on July 32rd, 1946, which was attended by representatives from forty ecclesiastical districts. Questions discussed at the synod included the spiritual care of the communities which still remained, the future task of the Church after the expulsion of the majority of Silesians, negotiations with the Polish Protestant Church in order to safeguard the property belonging to the communities which had been expelled, and the office of the Silesian Protestant provincial bishop.

The Protestant Church in Silesia came to be administered by the laity to an ever-increasing degree, as the majority of clergymen were expelled from the country. The deaconesses, on the other hand, were allowed to remain in Silesia somewhat longer.²⁰¹

6) *The Eviction of the Population*

The population in the broad strip of territory on either side of the Sudetic Mountains which had not been part of the theatre of war had for the most part remained there. Many of the refugees from Silesia who had also found shelter there returned to Silesia after the war was over. The Silesians who had been evacuated to Saxony, however, were refused permission to return to their native province by the Polish militia which was stationed all along the Lusatian Neisse. It was estimated by the Breslau cathedral-chapter at the beginning of 1946 that at least eight-tenths of the Silesian population remained in the districts which were not occupied by the Russians until after the capitulation. By the summer of 1945 the German population of Breslau again numbered 300,000. It was estimated by the Breslau cathedral-chapter at the end of 1945 that the total German population of the two provinces of Silesia, which prior to the war had numbered 5 million, now numbered about 3 million.²⁰²

Soon after Germany's collapse the Poles began to expel the German population. Expulsion measures were first enforced by the Poles in those districts of the archdiocese of Breslau located east of the Oder, in the province of Brandenburg. In these districts the clergy, too, were expelled, whereas in general German clergymen in other districts were for the time being allowed to remain, even in districts where most of the population was expelled.²⁰³

²⁰¹ *Ibid*, p 112 ff, for details

²⁰² Cf *Beitraege*, Vol II, p. 10, and Vol III, p 12. — According to Ulrich Bunzel, *loc cit*, p 110, there were only 1½ million Germans in Silesia at the beginning of 1946, but this figure is undoubtedly too low, since there are still about 1 million Silesians in Upper Silesia alone at the present time

²⁰³ By the end of 1945 there were, in any case, still about 500 Silesian clergymen in Upper Silesia and about 480 in Lower Silesia

In 1946 the expulsion of the Silesians was carried out on a large scale. A description of the manner in which the inhabitants of Penzig were evicted illustrates Polish methods in this respect.

"The inhabitants of Penzig who had returned there after the war, namely about 4,000 persons, were ordered to line up on the market-square at eight o'clock in the morning. There they were then informed that they had been expelled, and were told to appear on the market-square again in one and a half hour's time with their luggage, which must not exceed thirty pounds per person. A cordon of Polish soldiers and machine-guns was set up round the square. Polish soldiers then accompanied the inhabitants to their homes, and only allowed them 30 minutes' time, in most cases only 15 minutes, to pack up their belongings. The Poles then drove them back to the market-square, belabouring them with blows on the way. From the market-square the inhabitants were driven to the outskirts of the town where their luggage was checked. Here they were robbed of money and food, cutlery, bedding, and blankets. During the entire procedure the Poles thrashed and beat them, and constantly fired shots at their feet."²⁰⁴

Priests, members of religious orders²⁰⁵, and even the sick and the aged²⁰⁶ were all subjected to the same treatment and expelled in this way.

One of the most dreadful atrocities perpetrated by the Poles in this respect which aroused considerable horror and indignation was the manner in which a group of expellees were transported from Breslau on December 16th, 1946. One thousand six hundred Silesians were crowded into railway-trucks which were not heated, despite the fact that the temperature was about 13 degrees below zero. The only food they received was a little bread and one herring, and this was all they had to eat during the entire journey, which lasted until December 23rd, when they eventually arrived in Bueckeburg. Thirty-five deaths occurred on the journey, and 141 persons had to be taken to hospital on their arrival in Bueckeburg, where many of them died of exposure, pneumonia, and serious circulatory trouble.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁴ Cf *Beitraege*, Vol I, p. 26

²⁰⁵ c g in Neisse and Frankenstein See documentary section

²⁰⁶ On June 22nd, 1946, the Breslau hospitals and homes for the aged were informed that all the sick and the aged had to be ready to leave by two o'clock in the afternoon. Despite the fact that it was pouring with rain, the patients were conveyed to Freiburg station, Breslau, in open lorries. There were more than 500 sick and aged, and the journey in railway-trucks proved such a terrible ordeal for them that many of them died before they reached their destination. See *Beitraege*, Vol II, pp 33-34

²⁰⁷ Cf *Freie Presse*, of January 8, 1947

In a sermon which Protestant Bishop Dibelius held in the Marienkirche in Berlin on June 1st, 1947, he said that thousands of expellees from the German eastern territories had died as a result of the indescribable hardships they had been forced to endure.²⁰⁸

According to the census of October 29th, 1946, there were 1,622,907 Silesians in the Federal Republic of Germany at that time, that is to say, persons who were domiciled in Silesia, in the districts east of the Oder and the Neisse, on September 1st, 1939. They were distributed in the provinces and districts of the Federal Republic as follows:

Schleswig-Holstein	56,412
Hamburg	12,174
Lower Saxony	626,087
North Rhine-Westphalia	346,990
Bremen	6,628
Hesse	71,231
Wuerttemberg-Baden	49,215
Bavaria	434,281
Rhine-Palatinate	7,415
Baden	4,439
Wuerttemberg-Hohenzollern (including district of Lindau)	8,035 ²⁰⁹

According to the census of September, 1950, there were 4,469,460 persons in the Federal Republic and 4.4 million persons in the Soviet Zone of Germany who were domiciled in the Polish occupied German eastern territories, east of the Oder and the Neisse, on January 1st, 1939. How many of these persons were Silesians was not stated, but it has been estimated that there are at present about 2,204,000 Silesians living in the Federal Republic and 1.3 million Silesians living in the Soviet Zone of Germany. In addition, there are about 100,000 Silesians living in the western sector of Berlin, so that the total number of Silesians in all the four occupied zones of Germany at present amounts to about 3,604,000. According to Polish statistics²¹⁰ there are about one million so-called autochthons living in the

²⁰⁸ Cf. *Der Ueberblick*, No 24, p. 4. Publ. by Dr Schnell and Dr Steiner, München, 1947

²⁰⁹ Cf. *Statistische Berichte*, of November 25, 1949 (No. VIII/8/1). Edited by the Statistisches Amt des Vereinigten Wirtschaftsgebietes

²¹⁰ *Ibid*

German eastern territories now under Polish administration; of these, 200,000 live in Ermland (Masuria) and the majority, namely 800,000, in Silesia. As has been previously stated, most of the bilingual inhabitants of Upper Silesia, above all in the rural areas, have remained there and have become Polish subjects. In Lower Silesia, above all in the industrial district of Waldenburg, there are still about 20,000 Silesians. Thus there are still about four and a half million Silesians in the territory of the Reich as delimited by the frontiers of 1939.²¹¹

According to the latest statistics, 2,500,000 German civilians, not counting those killed in action, lost their lives during and immediately after the war. Of these, 1.5 million were domiciled in the territories east of the Oder and the Neisse. As the Silesian population at the end of the war numbered about half the population of the districts east of the Oder and the Neisse, it can be assumed that several hundred thousands of civilians in Silesia lost their lives during and immediately after the end of the war.²¹²

²¹¹ Estimated by the author on the strength of the above-mentioned figures. See also Dr. Werner, *Herkunftsgebiete, Wanderungswege und heutige Verteilung der deutschen Heimatvertriebenen im Vierzonen-Deutschland* Special reprint of map No 4, contained in *Europa und die deutschen Fluechtlinge*, published by the Institut zur Foerderung oeffentlicher Angelegenheiten, Frankfurt on Main, 1952.

²¹² Cf *Statistische Berichte*, loc cit.

GENERAL REFERENCES

In addition to the works referred to in the footnotes in the foregoing pages the following publications also contain detailed bibliographical information on the East German question:

Archiv, published by the Informationsdienst des Goettinger Arbeitskreises, Goettingen

Dr Viktor Loewe, *Bibliographie der schlesischen Geschichte* Silesian bibliography, Vol 1, edited by the Historische Kommission fuer Schlesien Publ. by Priebatsch's Buchhandlung, Breslau, 1927.

Publications by "Christ Unterwegs", 2, Schubertstrasse, Munich 15

Publications by the Deutsches Buero fuer Friedensfragen, Stuttgart. Mostly translations of extracts and articles from Polish books, newspapers, and journals, dealing with the question of the German eastern territories

Publications by the Johann Gottfried Herder Institute in Marburg on the Lahn, which, in connection with the work of the above-named bureau in Stuttgart, supplies information about Polish questions and the activity of Polish research institutes by a) research service, and b) translations

Publications of reports of the Europaeische Forschungsgruppe for the years, 1951 and 1952, edited by Dr. M Kornrumpf and Dr. E Pfeil, Munich

PART TWO

Documents on the Silesian Tragedy 1945/46

The following documents are for the most part taken from the *Beitraege zur Geschichte der Erzdioezese Breslau in den Schicksalsjahren 1945 bis 1951* (6. Vols.)¹, which, owing to the wealth of subject matter, has as yet only been compiled in manuscript.

The *Beitraege* consist of eyewitness accounts and reports, by members of the various Catholic parishes belonging to the diocese of Breslau, of events in Silesia since the Russian Occupation in the year 1945. For obvious reasons the names of the authors of these accounts and reports are not mentioned in this book.

These reports do not seek to lay the entire blame for the incidents which occurred on any one group of persons. When, for instance, the atrocities committed by the Poles are mentioned in the following accounts, the Poles referred to are those Bolsheviks whose conduct was condemned in many Polish circles. (In this connection cf. also footnote 15, p. 135.) There were many Russian and Polish soldiers who were highly indignant at the behaviour of their comrades and sought to help the German population.

These accounts of the terrible events which occurred in Eastern Germany at the end of World War II do not aim to stir up hatred but to pave the way for a fair and just peace. They aim to serve the cause of history and of truth and to make all those concerned realize that the fetters of injustice and tyranny must be burst asunder. They are a solemn warning to all mankind that a world which is godless and lawless scorns man's rights and privileges, and inevitably brings about its own destruction.²

¹ Referred to in the footnotes as *Beitraege*

² Cf. Max Pribilla, S. J., "Die Verteidigung Europas" in *Stimmen der Welt* (monthly journal on spiritual and cultural life at the present time), Vol 150, 1951/52, No 8, p 87 ff. in particular, where the author discusses the defense of Europe from the spiritual aspect

SECTION I

*Report No. 1***The Occupation of Silesia by the Russians
from January to May, 1945³***1) The Battle of the Vistula*
(Sketches I and II)

In the summer of 1944 the German troops on the Eastern front were involved in heavy and almost hopeless combat against the Russian troops who were far superior in numbers. As a result of the Anglo-American invasion in Italy and France so much more manpower was needed on these two fronts that the German armies fighting in the east could no longer be supplied with the necessary reinforcements. In September and October, 1944, the Germans managed to a certain extent to stabilize the Eastern front between the Carpathians and the Baltic Sea, an achievement which was due solely to the tactical skill and fighting proficiency of the German troops, two factors which made up for their shortage of manpower as compared to the Russian troops, and also, to some degree, as far as circumstances permitted, remedied the serious errors made by the Supreme Command with respect to strategic operations on this front. The Hungarian and Roumanian sectors, where the fighting continued in moving combats, were the only ones in which there was no stabilized front in the autumn of 1944.

In October, 1944, the stabilized front between the Carpathians and the Baltic extended from Kaschau in Hungary via Jaslo and to the east of Gorlice and Tarnov, the old battlefields of 1915, as far as the Vistula and then proceeded along the course of the Vistula up to Warsaw and Modlin. At the end of their summer offensive the Russians had, however, succeeded in capturing three important bridgeheads on the Vistula, south of Warsaw. The most southerly bridgehead at Baranov, near the confluence of the San and the Vistula, and the northern bridgehead at Magnussev, at the confluence of the Pilica and the Vistula, were so extensive that the Russians were able to assemble considerable forces at these points, preparatory to launching an attack on the Reich. The middle bridgehead at Pulawy, to the east of Zwolen, on the other hand, was only of local importance.

To the north of Warsaw and Modlin the German front followed the course of the River Narev and then proceeded for the most part along the East Prussian frontier.

The German Northern Army in Kurland was entirely cut off from this front.

As regards the entire front between the Carpathians and the Baltic, Command A was in charge of the sector between Kaschau and Modlin, whilst Command Centre was in charge of the sector extending from

³ s. *Beitraege*, Vol VI, p. 1 ff.

Modlin up to the Baltic. Command Centre thus had the task of protecting East and West Prussia, whilst Command A, by defending Slovakia, was to safeguard the two provinces of Silesia and the Warthe district against Russian attacks.

Sketch I shows the frontal position of Command A, which had its headquarters in Cracow. This Command consisted of four armies, of which the 1st Panzer Army, under the command of General Heinrici, was stationed in the sector between Kaschau and Jaslo and entrusted with the task of defending Slovakia, whilst the adjoining 17th Army, under the command of General Schulz of the armoured corps, was to defend the lowlands between the Carpathians and the Vistula.

North of the Vistula the 4th Panzer Army, under General Gracser of the armoured corps, surrounded the dangerous Russian bridgehead at Baranov, whilst the 9th Army, under the command of General Freiherr von Luetwitz of the armoured corps, defended the Vistula front as far as Modlin, thus preventing the Russian forces at the Magnussev bridgehead from advancing into the vast plains of central Poland and the Warthe district.

From the beginning of October, 1944, onwards all was deceptively quiet on all sectors of the front between the Carpathians and Modlin, but the G. O. C. in C. of Command A, General Harpe, and his chief of staff, Lieutenant General von Xylander, were both perfectly aware of the fact that this state of affairs was merely a pause preparatory to a new offensive. The Russians, too, needed this pause in order to reinforce their troops, which had suffered considerable losses in the summer offensive of 1944, and also in order to concentrate their forces prior to deployment for a large-scale attack which would take them over the German frontier. And what the objectives of such an attack would be, could be clearly foreseen. The most tempting objective, as far as the Russians were concerned, lay behind the German front at the Baranov bridgehead, namely the extensive industrial district of Upper Silesia, the only large German industrial area which had so far in no way been damaged by heavy Anglo-American bomber squadrons and where production was still going on to the full capacity. It was obvious that the Russian tank units at the important northern bridgehead at Magnussev would attempt to proceed via the plains of Poland, which presented no obstacle, and Poznan to the Oder, and from there to Berlin. It was likewise evident that the Russians, in pursuing these aims which would decide the issue of the war, would attempt to cut off that sector of the German front between the two bridgeheads which abutted on the Vistula and would try to annihilate the German forces there. These assumptions were furthermore corroborated by the observations of the German reconnaissance units as regards the distribution of the Russian troops and the steadily increasing concentration of the latter at the three Vistula bridgeheads.

The German divisions which in October, 1944, held the winding German front had been seriously weakened and heavily taxed. No reinforcements worth mentioning were available at the moment. In the course

of the next few months, however, the Germans managed to withdraw all the tank and motorized units from the front and began to reinforce them. In addition, infantry divisions were also withdrawn from the front. Command A therefore believed that by December, 1944, it would be able to make five tank divisions, two motorized infantry divisions, and six or seven infantry divisions available as reserves in the Vistula bend between Cracow and Warsaw, that is to say in the sector in which the large-scale attack of the Russians was expected. Indeed, during the quiet months between October, 1944, and January, 1945, the Germans managed, to a limited extent, to reinforce and fill up the numbers of the infantry divisions which had remained at the front.

As the German Supreme Command used its last strategic reserves in December, 1944, in order to force a partial decision in the Ardennes offensive in the west, the German forces on the Eastern front, that is to say, in particular those in the most important sector of the front at the Russian Vistula bridgeheads, were obliged to rely on their own strength and reserves and could not hope for further reinforcements from other German fronts.

The main thing was, then, to strengthen the defensive power of the German units by new combinations and special training, and, by consolidating certain positions, to provide them with a proper line of defense and resistance. For once a break-through in the German front had been effected by the Russians there were no natural obstacles of any kind between the Vistula and the Oder to prevent the Russian tank units from advancing. Only the active resistance of the German reserves would be able to halt the influx of the Russian troops into Germany.

In order to strengthen the defensive power of the German troops a series of fieldworks which extended far back into the German hinterland was set up, the local population assisting in the erection of the same to a very considerable degree. Fieldworks and barricades were produced as if by magic, not only in the administrative province of Poland, where the Hubertus line and the A1 line were constructed, but also in the provinces of Upper and Lower Silesia and in the Warthe district. The A2 line was intended as a protection for the frontier between Silesia and Poland, whilst the so-called Barthold line was set up in the Breslau district to protect Breslau, and special fortifications, the "Upper Silesian fortress", were erected to protect the industrial district of Upper Silesia.

It was, of course, a prerequisite for the defense of these lines and positions, which represented an enormous achievement as regards work, that troops, that is to say reserve forces, should be available that had not been used at the front and would thus be fresh when they encountered the advancing aggressor. Despite the fact that these reserve forces which Command A intended to supply from its own strength were not particularly large in number, it was, however, hoped that they would, with the aid of the positions that had been set up and by mobile tactics, undermine the

strength of the Russian aggressor between the Vistula and the Silesian frontier and thus prevent him from reaching the Silesian frontier.

Owing to developments in Hungary, where the Russians had advanced across the Danube, and to the decision of the Supreme Command to launch an attack in this sector at the end of December in order to relieve the capital, Budapest, which was being besieged, the forces which Command A had planned to throw in as reserves were withdrawn by order of the Supreme Command, and by the middle of December, 1944, almost half of the proposed reserve forces, namely one tank division and five infantry divisions, had been transferred to the Hungarian theatre. Command A was thus no longer in a position to adhere to its original plan concerning the defensive battle in the Vistula bend. The few remaining forces behind the front in this sector would never be able to hold up the advancing Russian tank corps once the latter had broken through the German front. In view of the fact that the Russians had far more means of attack at their disposal than the Germans — artillery, tanks, planes, — it was fairly obvious that they would probably attempt to break through the German front. As the Ardennes offensive had meanwhile begun, which made it unlikely that large reinforcements would be supplied from any of the other fronts, and as Command A would therefore be obliged to face the imminent Russian attack with its reduced forces, the chief of the general staff of the Command, Lieutenant General von Xylander, drew up a new operational plan, the so-called "Schlittenfahrt Plan".

Lieutenant General von Xylander realized that the few reserves available would never be able to halt a Russian break-through by rigid defense. His aim was therefore to regain the initiative for the German forces shortly before the Russian offensive in the Vistula bend began. For this reason his plan provided that the German units defending that sector of the German front between the Russian bridgeheads at Baranov and Magnussev which abutted on the Vistula should retreat a certain distance and thus shorten the German front on the Vistula bend, moving it back to the chord of the Vistula curve, namely to the Hubertus line, and thereby making up for the lack of reserves. Using all its available reserves of infantry and tanks, the southern flank of the 9th Army was then to veer round towards the Russian spearhead at the Magnussev bridgehead and, when the latter was about to advance, attack it on both sides and destroy it, whilst at the same time, the 4th Panzer Army was to maintain its defensive position on a shortened front against the second Russian spearhead at the Baranov bridgehead. If the southern flank of the 9th Army succeeded in annihilating the northern Russian spearhead, General von Xylander intended to deal with the Russian assault units at the Baranov bridgehead according to the circumstances which had arisen in the meantime. The advantage of this plan was that the German troops in the front lines, by retreating, would withdraw from the range of the preparatory artillery fire of the Russians and would thus have suffered no losses when the time arrived to meet the enemy

attack. Of course, the "Schlittenfahrt Plan" was not an infallible guarantee of a victory; a certain risk would always be involved since the Russian forces were superior in number. But at least it was a make-shift plan, such as Moltke might have conceived, which endeavoured to do justice to the initiative of the German troops and to the distribution of manpower, and it certainly was preferable to a blind submission to circumstances which would inevitably have led to considerable losses.

Even Lieutenant General von Xylander, the originator of the plan, had certain misgivings, and he actually voiced the following opinion to one of his closest co-workers: "If we succeed in holding up the Russian attack either at the A 1 line or even at the Silesian frontier in the course of the mobile combat, in which we are still superior to the enemy, then we can, at least, say that we have carried out our task. There is not much more we can do, in any case. At least, production in the Upper Silesian industrial district can then continue, the enemy will have been kept off German soil, and the Supreme Command will so gain time to turn the military situation created by us into political action."

General Harpe, the G. O. C. in C. of Command A, approved of this operational plan and was very much in favour of its being carried out. As a large part of the territory held by the Germans, which was not, however, part of the Reich, would have to be relinquished in the course of these operations, the plan had to be first of all sanctioned by the Supreme Command before it could be put into practice. Despite the fact that the chief of the general staff of the army and his second-in-command, General Wenk, fully agreed with the suggestions of the chiefs of Command A and even went so far as to advocate most strongly that the "Schlittenfahrt Plan" be carried out, the Supreme Command refused to give its permission and ordered Command A to remain in its present positions and face the Russian attack. At the last moment, on January 11th, 1945, before the Russians began to attack, General Guderian made a final attempt to obtain the permission of the Supreme Command and to transfer new forces from the west to the rear of those positions which were threatened most, but in the face of so much stubbornness he was unable to assert himself.

The question of carrying out the operations independently and without permission was also considered, but General Harpe could not decide to act against higher orders, although the decision cost him a hard struggle. Incidentally, one of the main reasons why he was removed from his post on January 20th, 1945, was because he advocated and supported this operational plan.

The position of Command A and its reduced forces, when the Russians began their offensive on January 12th, 1945, with all the tactics which had been foreseen and with a vast superiority of numbers, was thus from the outset fairly hopeless. Whilst strategists and general staffs on both sides were making their plans for the future issue of the battle in the Vistula bend and the god of war was weighing the white and black lots of the victor and the vanquished in his hand, the people of Silesia waited

behind the scenes of the theatre of war, uncertain as to what the future would bring. They had been roused out of their state of deceptive security by the order to help in the work of constructing entrenchments and fortifications, and had thus, to some extent, had a certain foreboding of their fate, but this foreboding had in part been superseded by the propaganda of the highest authorities, namely that the German armies would be victorious.

So far, the enemy had not entered Silesia, nor had the air-supremacy of the Western allies made itself felt, save for one attack, carried out from their base in Italy, since the beginning of September, 1944, when the Upper Silesian industrial district had been raided and the refineries at Heydebreck had been razed to the ground. Apart from this, however, the two Silesian provinces had been spared as regards damage caused by enemy air-raids.⁴

Apart from the usual restrictions introduced in time of war, the population of Silesia still led a normal life. Indeed, many of the persons who had lost all their possessions in the course of air-raids in other parts of Germany and had found accommodation in Silesia had been able to make good their losses, since Silesia still had very considerable supplies of manufactured products, household goods, etc., at its disposal. None of the Silesians had lost their homes and their possessions and none of them had been forced to flee. On the contrary, the towns and villages were overcrowded with evacuees from those districts of Germany which were threatened by air-raids. Many of them had been officially evacuated to Silesia from Western Germany, whilst others had come to Silesia of their own accord and had found private accommodation with their friends or relatives. Industrial and agricultural production continued in its full capacity. In fact, the Upper Silesian industrial district and the Waldenburg district had become the industrial centre of Germany since production in the industrial region of the Ruhr had been slowed down to an ever-increasing degree as a result of enemy air-raids. Supplies of raw materials and semi-finished goods were so abundant as to meet the needs of industry and of the population for years to come. Owing to the volume of agricultural production it was not only possible to supply the population of Silesia with all the food they were entitled to receive on their ration cards, but also to furnish other districts in Germany with large quantities of staple foods. Traffic and transport had been adjusted to wartime conditions, but could still be described as normal. By using all the material and manpower available, the railways were able to meet demands as regards rolling stock for industrial and military purposes — these demands were highest in Upper Silesia — and, in addition, continued to provide an extensive passenger service for civilians. The railways were all in perfect working order and they were not forced to resort to makeshift services, as had become the case in almost all the other districts of Germany as a result of air-raids.

⁴ The first air-raid on Breslau occurred during the first week of October, 1944, when the cathedral was damaged.

On the eve of the Russian offensive of January 12th, 1945, Silesia was, therefore, practically still untouched by the war. There were no difficulties to cope with as regards food supplies, traffic and transport, and safety. Industry and agriculture were capable of producing their full output. Great burdens had been imposed on the population in connection with the work of defending and fortifying the two provinces, but these burdens were willingly borne.

The two provinces of Upper and Lower Silesia came under the administration of the district leaders of the National Socialist Party, namely Bracht in Upper Silesia, and Hanke in Lower Silesia, who at the same time, as Reichs defense commissaries, were also responsible for the construction of fieldworks and the calling up of the Volkssturm or national home guards, and thus interfered with the authoritative powers of the military headquarters of the Silesian Army Corps Command VIII in Breslau. The district leaders had drawn up plans for the evacuation of the population, but they were theoretical rather than practicable plans, and the possibility of large industrial areas being intentionally destroyed had not been taken into account.

It is no exaggeration to say that Silesia was the very heart of Germany when the Russians mercilessly began to stab it to death on January 12th, 1945, the day that the Russian offensive which was to decide the issue of the war commenced.

The offensive was conducted in the Vistula bend with 20 tank corps and 116 infantry divisions. The manpower ratio as regards aggression and defense was as follows:

infantry	11 · 1
tank units	7 · 1
artillery	20 : 1

It was impossible to estimate the superiority of the Russian air force in numbers, but the units of the VIII German Air Force Corps, under the command of General Seydemann, which collaborated with Command A, were so superior to the Russians in single combat that they made up for their lack of numbers, both in respect of time and place.

By concentrated fire, which could not, however, be assisted by air activity owing to poor visibility, the Russians destroyed the defensive positions of the German front-line divisions within a few hours of beginning the offensive, and Russian tanks swarmed through the gaps in the German front, advancing into the hinterland where there was hardly any defense at all. In the case of the Baranov bridgehead this happened on January 12th, 1945, whilst the same thing occurred at the Pulawy and Magnussev bridgeheads two days later, on January 14th. The Russians also succeeded in effecting a considerable break-through south of the Vistula, namely at Jaslo, in the sector of the 17th Army, but the latter managed to preserve its unity and retreat as far as the River Dunajec.

To the north of the Vistula the greater part of the German line of resistance collapsed completely. The only sectors where fierce fighting raged for several days was near Kielce, at Radom, and north of Radom, where there were a few German motorized reserves who launched a counter-attack, but the Russian tanks outflanked these German resistance islands on the left and the right and continued to advance towards the German frontier.

The situation on January 16th, 1945, as it presented itself to General Harpe in Cracow, was as follows (s. Sketch II).

On the right flank of Command A the 1st Panzer Army had only been attacked locally in the Hungarian-Slovakian frontier sector and had been able to hold its position without much difficulty.

Between the Carpathians and the Vistula the 17th Army had been engaged in combat with the enemy and had retreated to the Dunajec line, where, for the time being, there was no imminent danger. In the southern sector of the 4th Panzer Army to the north of the Vistula two German infantry divisions, which had been brought up as reserves, had managed to hold up the enemy advance after the Russians had effected a break-through, and were now fighting in the sector extending from the confluence of the Nida and the Vistula to Miechov, north-east of Cracow.

The northern flank of the 4th Panzer Army and the southern flank of the 9th Army, however, had been completely displaced by the Russian attacks launched from the three bridgeheads. From Miechov to the River Pilica the Russian tank armies were spreading out more and heading westwards, their spearheads in the south pointing in the direction of Tschenstochau and in the north towards Lodz. In this sector there was no longer any co-ordinated resistance. In fierce counter-attacks German tank units — the XXIV panzer corps under the command of General Nehring of the armoured corps — in the Kielce sector were engaged in shaking off the Russian infantry and tank units which were closing in round them, and were receiving the remnants of the retreating divisions which had been forced out of their positions. Surrounded by Russian forces, the XXIV panzer corps then began to fight its way back to the northwest. The high command of the 4th Panzer Army, the most important headquarters in the sector under attack, had been forced to relinquish its command post and had been put to rout by Russian tank spearheads. Contact with the command was no longer possible; indeed, its fate was unknown.

Between the confluence of the Pilica and the Vistula and Warsaw German forces were still holding the front at the Vistula, but the Russians had already broken through the flank of the 9th Army in this sector and were advancing towards Lodz. The two German tank divisions of the XXX panzer corps, which had been placed in readiness here, tried in vain to hold up the attacking 1st and 2nd Russian tank armies as they advanced from the Magnussev bridgehead. It is true that they managed to avoid being closed in by the Russians, but their 250 tanks were simply scattered by the enemy tanks which numbered 2,000.

To the north of Warsaw, that is to say, in the sector between Warsaw and Modlin, the Russians had also broken through the northern flank of the 9th Army, thus cutting off all contact with Command Centre, which was likewise being attacked by the enemy.

At the same time, the staff of Command A transferred its headquarters to Tschenstochau, but it was overtaken and almost captured by Russian tank spearheads there on January 17th, 1945, and was obliged to retreat to Oppeln.

The two following accounts of local combats show that, in the first place, the vast work of constructing entrenchments and fortifications in the hinterland had not been in vain where German troops held these positions, and, secondly, that the fighting spirit and morale of the German troops was unbroken. The German soldiers knew full well that they were no longer fighting for Hitler, but for their wives, children, and families, and they faced the enemy courageously and intrepidly.

*The Fighting at the German bridgehead of Pincov on the Nida,
on January 14th, 1945*

Two infantry battalions and two anti-tank companies, including 16 heavy 25-pounder anti-tank guns, had been set up here, on the A1 line, to protect the bridge over the Nida. The defense positions set up to the left and right of them had not been manned. A fierce battle was raging to the east, and to judge by the sound the fighting was gradually approaching. The first lot of transport and supply columns, wounded soldiers, and those whose units had been scattered by the enemy passed the German defense positions on the A1 line, bringing rumours of defeat, Russian atrocities, and accounts of huge numbers of Russian tanks. On the morning of January 14th, 1945, the first Russian tanks appeared opposite the German positions, their numbers rapidly increasing until an attack was launched in order to capture the Nida bridge from the Germans. The heavy anti-tank guns immediately went into action, and the Russian tanks, group by group as they advanced, were promptly destroyed and damaged before they even had a chance to ascertain where exactly the German cannon were posted. Russian motorized infantry now arrived on the scene and tried to force the tank attack, which had come to a standstill, forward. Thereupon the German anti-tank guns continued their fire more fiercely than ever and annihilated whole columns of the enemy. Men, vehicles, and tanks, etc., collided with each other and became a confused, tangled mass, as they attempted to rush forward. German combat aircraft now launched two or three attacks on the enemy, thus causing him to suffer fresh losses. Eventually, the Russians realized that it was futile to persist in a frontal attack and decided to advance to the rear of the German front by evading this position, which apparently could not be captured. To his surprise the enemy found that the German position to the north was not manned. Thus, by outflanking the first position he forced the German units to retreat in a manoeuvre which involved no losses on the German side.

*The Fighting at Wloszczowa, east of Tschenstochau,
on January 15th, 1945*

The command post of the 1st protective division which had been entrusted with the task of protecting the sector of the A 1 line in front of Wloszczowa had been set up at Wloszczowa. The protective units, which were only few in number and which had been posted at intervals along the A 1 line and had held these positions on the previous day, had now been scattered and put to rout by enemy tanks or else had been forced to retreat, after having been outflanked by the enemy, who had got through to the rear by way of those sectors of the A 1 line which were unprotected. In Wloszczowa, however, the highway leading to Tschenstochau was covered, and the commanding officer now set about rounding up all the soldiers whose units had been scattered by the enemy and who straggled into the town, and began to consolidate the defensive positions there. On the morning of January 15th, a few German artillery units also arrived in the town, and for a whole day this strange medley of forces successfully warded off the concentrated attack of the 3rd Russian Guard Tank Army. It was not until January 16th, after the enemy had outflanked them, that they retreated to Tschenstochau, where they arrived just in time to throw back the first group of Russian tanks which had entered the town.

The same thing happened in numerous other places. Wherever the enemy encountered stubborn resistance he outflanked these German islands of resistance, thus causing the German troops to retreat.

By January 16th, 1945, all the German forces available were involved in the Russian offensive, and the commands had no other reinforcements nor reserves at their disposal to throw into battle. Finally, as a last resource, the 208th Silesian infantry division, which constituted part of the extreme right flank of the 1st Panzer Army, was removed from the front, at great risk, and transferred to Brieg in Silesia by rail. In doing so, the fact had, of course, to be taken into consideration that it would probably take them days to get there, owing to the inadequate railway service and the danger of partisans in Slovakia.

Eventually, the Supreme Command realized that something must be done to remedy the situation. Accordingly, the offensive in Hungary was temporarily discontinued and two of the tank divisions there were transferred to Upper Silesia. In addition, the Panzer Corps "Gross-deutschland" was to be transferred to Silesia from East Prussia, where its absence would, incidentally, make itself felt in the decisive offensive which had begun there, and two infantry divisions were also to be sent to Silesia from the western theatre of war.

The G. O. C. in C. of Command A, General Harpe, was removed from his post and replaced by General Schoerner, who until then had been the G. O. C. in Kurland.

Thus, all the Supreme Command was willing to provide in the decisive battle for Eastern Germany was a new G. O. C. in C. and six divi-

sions, whereas, on the other hand, excellently equipped divisions of the 6th SS Panzer Army were sent to Hungary in order to resume hostilities there.

The only measure sanctioned by the Supreme Command was the withdrawal of the German troops still holding the sector of the Vistula front between Pilica and Warsaw, which was practically surrounded by the enemy on all sides. Orders were however issued that Warsaw was to be defended and held as a citadel. As a result of a disturbance in the radio telephone network and a misunderstanding when a certain order was transmitted to him, the commanding officer of the citadel fortunately left the town before it was completely surrounded by the enemy. This fact actually cost the chief of the operations section of the general staff of the army, Colonel von Bonin, his job, and he was sent to a concentration camp.

The Supreme Command hoped that the reinforcements which were now to be sent to the Eastern front would save the situation there, and, until they arrived, the German forces in the East were exhorted to delay the final battle and to prevent the enemy from advancing across the frontier into Silesia.

On January 20th, 1945, General Schoerner arrived at the headquarters of Command A in Oppeln. Command A was immediately renamed Command Centre, and Command Centre, which was defending East and West Prussia, was now newly designated as Command North. Before Schoerner had a chance to devote his attention to the military situation the head of the Reichs Armaments Ministry, Speer, and the state secretary of the Ministry of Transport as representative of the Minister of Transport, Dorpmueller, arrived and pointed out that the loss of the industrial district of Upper Silesia would mean the end of industrial production and of traffic and transport, as this was the only German industrial area left in which production was still going on and where coal was still being mined. In view of the rapid development of events in the military situation, Command Centre, however, could give no assurances as to whether it would be possible to defend Upper Silesia for any length of time if no more reserves than had hitherto been the case were provided. Speer promised to do his utmost in this respect. Actually, nothing at all was done, save that the supreme war lord issued an order that Upper Silesia was to be defended at all costs.

During this discussion between Schoerner and Speer it was agreed that any form of intentional destruction and demolition in the nature of a scorched earth policy was to be avoided, and that only such destruction and demolition was to be permitted as was necessary for purely military reasons. Despite the fact that much stricter instructions had been issued by the highest powers, the following rules were laid down at this discussion:

- a) Everything was to be destroyed which might be of use to the enemy in conducting the war and might be used against the Ger-

man troops, provided that such things could not be removed to safety in time by the Germans or could not be distributed among the population.

- b) All objects were to be destroyed which might slow down the Russian advance provided this was advantageous for the military counter-measures undertaken by the Germans.

Both Speer and Schoerner rejected the idea of destroying industrial plants, whole towns, or villages.

Although no definite limit, either as regards time or place, can be fixed with respect to the military operations, it is nevertheless certain that the battle in the Vistula bend became the battle of Silesia about January 20th, 1945. It is true that part of the operations were still being conducted in the territory bordering on Poland and Silesia, but events after January 20th, 1945, were determined by the fact that Russian tank spearheads had crossed the Silesian frontier and were trying to break through to the Oder. At the same time, the German command in the Silesian frontier region was endeavouring to retard the enemy's advance in order to gain time and organize a strong defense along the Oder and protect the industrial district of Upper Silesia.

2) *The Fighting in the Silesian and Polish Frontier Territory at the End of January, 1945*

(Sketch III)

The situation such as it was on January 20th, 1945, when the new G.O.C. in C. of Command Centre, General Schoerner, studied it on the operational map at Command headquarters in Oppeln, was enough to make a less intrepid general than Schoerner despair, in view of the task which had been set him. The Russian advance which had spread out along the centre of the front between Tschenstochau and Lodz continued without a break, and even the German islands of resistance which were formed here and there failed to retard its progress. To complicate matters, a severe frost set in and the temperature dropped to four degrees below zero. This cold spell did not affect the German and Russian soldiers very much as they were hardened against the weather, but it certainly made itself felt among the population of Silesia, many of whom were now leaving their homes and trekking along the highways in the hopes of escaping to some place where they would not be exposed to the Russian invasion.

From January 20th to January 31st, 1945, the military situation developed as follows: In order to avoid being completely outflanked and cut off by the enemy in the north, the 1st Panzer Army, on the right flank of Command Centre, was forced to relinquish the positions it had so far held between Kaschau and Jaslo and to retreat along the Wag valley through Eastern Slovakia towards the west. In the course of this retreat, which, to begin with, the enemy allowed to proceed practically

undisturbed, the 1st Panzer Army was obliged to assist the Hungarian army south of its command which had been completely put to rout by the Russians, whilst in the north it had to aid the 17th Army which was retreating towards the Upper Silesian industrial region. In this way the command of the 1st Panzer Army was extended as far as the southern edge of the Upper Silesian industrial district, whilst, at the same time, it also continued to supply any forces it could disengage to this area in order to strengthen the 17th Army.

Under strong enemy pressure the 17th Army was retreating to the eastern edge of the Upper Silesian industrial region, where, aided by the consolidated frontier fortifications, it was to set up a front and defend this district. In addition, the two armoured divisions which were being withdrawn from Hungary at the time were transferred to the district of Gleiwitz and Beuthen as reinforcements for the 17th Army. Considerable resistance on the part of the German forces was thus to be expected in this sector. Indeed, at the end of January and the beginning of February the Russian advance actually came to a standstill in this district. The enemy continued to attack fiercely, however, from the north and east, and a heavy battle was in progress on the eastern and northern edges of the industrial district for possession of the pits and mines, whilst deep down, under the ground, the miners were still mining the coal and the precious supplies were being conveyed westwards by way of the railway routes which were still out of the enemy's reach.

There were no focal points to the north of this new front. Until January 25th, German forces of various kinds succeeded in holding an Oder bridgehead near Oppeln, but the XXXI Russian tank corps then effected a break-through, and the German front between Cosel and Oppeln had to be moved back to the west bank of the Oder. To evade the enemy, Command Centre had to transfer its headquarters to Bad Salzbrunn. After seizing Tschenstochau on January 18th, the 3rd Russian Guard Tank Army on the following day crossed the Silesian frontier between Rosenberg and Kreuzburg. The enemy set fire to the Silesian villages near the frontier, and very soon rumours of the dreadful atrocities, massacres, and cases of rape committed by the Russians spread like wildfire and preceded the invading columns.

Remnants of German front-line units joined with Volkssturm battalions, which had been called up in the meantime, and with police units in a desperate attempt to defend frontier positions. They were assisted to some degree by an artillery brigade which arrived as reinforcement and which, in a bold raid launched on the sector extending from Rosenberg to Wielun, cut in between the advanced guard and the bulk of the enemy's tank divisions and inflicted heavy losses on the enemy. But the Russians were by far superior in numbers, and in the course of the next two days, that is to say, by January 20th, German resistance in this sector was broken and the enemy then pushed forward as far as the Oder, between Brieg and Ohlau. On January 22nd, 1945, the first lot of Russian motorized infantry and tanks crossed the Oder, which was partly

icebound, and advanced as far as Mollwitz⁵, the old battlefield of the First Silesian War. Here the enemy encountered the first units of the 208th Silesian Division, which had been transferred to this sector from Hungary and were still intact. They put up a desperate resistance, for, after all, they were Silesians fighting on their own soil and defending their homes and families in the truest sense, and in the course of fierce combats they managed to bring the Russian advance to a halt.

North of the Russian bridgehead at the Oder, between Brieg and Ohlau, the 4th Russian Tank Army had advanced via Wielun along the Breslau highway in a westerly direction, and it reached Gross-Wartenberg, east of Oels, before it was intercepted by spearheads of the 267th Infantry Division, which had been rushed to the scene from the Western front. Fierce fighting ensued at Kempen, Bialin, and Gross-Wartenberg. The sound of the cannon could be heard in Breslau, a fact which prompted the population there to resort to unfortunate evacuation measures. The Russian command, which always tended to evade any stubborn resistance, once again decided to resort to an outflanking manoeuvre. Accordingly, the enemy now broke off the combat at the bridgehead near Brieg and to the east of Breslau, and, turning both tank armies in a northerly direction, away from Breslau, proceeded to advance via Tiebnitz to Steinau⁶ on the Oder, arriving there about January 28th, 1945. The town of Trebnitz⁷, which was not defended, was completely ransacked and looted and most of it demolished by the Russians when they captured it.

The important bridge over the Oder at Steinau was defended solely by an N. C. O.'s training school, garrisoned there. Thanks to their courage and intrepidity these men managed to prevent the Russian armies from capturing the bridge and the town, but they were powerless to prevent the enemy from outflanking the town to the north and south and setting up a second bridgehead across the Oder. Despite the fact that they were surrounded on all sides, they continued to put up a stubborn

⁵ Russian forces, advancing from the northwest, captured Mollwitz on January 31st, 1945

⁶ The monastery and the hospital conducted by the order of the Brethren of Charity, as well as the church in Steinau were completely destroyed in the course of the fighting there

⁷ Reverend Father Huebner, the parish-priest of Trebnitz (died on October 24, 1946), who remained behind with the rest of the inhabitants, who did not flee, and sought shelter at the Convent of the Sisters of Mercy, told the editor of this book, who arrived in Trebnitz from Breslau at the end of May, 1945, that the Russians, upon invading the town (11,400 inhabitants, of whom 3,600 were Catholics), which until then had suffered no damage whatsoever, had immediately set fire to whole rows of streets, with the result that most of Trebnitz, including the Catholic vicarage, which contained valuable historical documents dating from the Middle Ages, had been destroyed. Several attempts were also made to set fire to the convent church in Trebnitz, which contains the tomb of the patron saint of Silesia, St Hedwig, but thanks to the vigilance of the nuns and to the timely aid of some Russian officers the fires could be extinguished.

resistance and in this way retarded the enemy's advance. At the beginning of February a German tank brigade arrived in the vicinity of Steinau, and in the course of a surprise attack broke through the Russian lines and freed the men who had defended the town.

What had meanwhile become of the 4th Panzer Army? On January 25th, the command of this army had arrived in Glogau after having managed to escape the attack of the Russian tank spearheads in the Vistula bend. The troops of the army, however, had joined up with the staff of the XXIV Panzer Corps and were laboriously fighting their way out of the Kielce sector, in an attempt to reach Glogau. The Corps was having to be supplied with reinforcements by plane, and it was impossible to foresee whether the break-through to Glogau would succeed or not.

In the meantime, the command of the 4th Panzer Army in Glogau rounded up all the scattered units and remnants of divisions which arrived there from the entire Vistula front, and endeavoured to set up a front proceeding south and north of Glogau along the Oder. In addition, an important Oder bridgehead near Glogau was still in the hands of the Germans, from which it was possible to establish contact with small protective units on the southern flank of the 9th Army which were posted at and to the north of Lissa in the Warthe district.

The 9th Army, once it had been forced out of its positions along the Vistula, had, on account of its shortage of manpower, been unable to set up a closed front in the vast plains of the Warthe district against the 1st and 2nd Russian tank armies and infantry armies, and was rapidly retreating towards the Oder sector between Guben and Frankfurt/Oder, pursued by the enemy. It was only on reaching this sector that it finally managed to halt the Russian advance.

At the beginning of February, the 9th Army was removed from Command Centre and became part of Command Vistula, a newly formed command under the leadership of Himmler. In his usual harsh and severe manner Schoerner had previously dismissed the G.O.C. in C. of the 9th Army, General Freiherr von Luetwitz, and had appointed General Busse, who was extremely capable, in his stead.

The fate of the Panzer Corps "Grossdeutschland", which was to be brought up as reinforcement for the 9th Army in order to intercept the Russian assault launched from the Magnussev bridgehead, was somewhat different. The entire Party hierarchy in the East and in particular the National Socialist district leader of the Warthe district, Greiser, set their hopes on this Corps. The detraining stations at Lodz were already being shelled by the enemy as one detachment after the other of the "Grossdeutschland" approached the town. This crack corps, however, was not used to giving in. In the course of fierce combats, which were in no way co-ordinated but were taken up by each detachment in turn as it arrived, the Corps managed to capture the detraining stations and area of assembly at Lodz. But the chief of this Corps, General von

Saucken, was faced with a difficult decision. The orders he had received originally, namely to advance against the enemy's bridgehead at Magnussew, were no longer practicable. According to a more recent order he had received from Command Centre, he was to proceed south in order to relieve General Nehring's panzer corps which was fighting its way back to Glogau. If he carried out this order he would cut off his own rear communication lines, and his corps, like the one he was to relieve, would become a moving pocket, surrounded and pursued by the enemy. He nevertheless obeyed the order to help his comrades in distress and launched an attack in a southerly direction. The two corps met at the Warthe, and together they succeeded in effecting a break-through to Glogau. As a result, their strength was much reduced, but as it was imperative that the Russian bridgehead at Steinau, which was becoming an ever-increasing danger, should be attacked and destroyed, both corps once more advanced from Glogau in order to launch an attack in a southerly direction, the XXIV Panzer Corps proceeding west of the Oder and the "Grossdeutschland" Panzer Corps east of the river. They were, however, unsuccessful, and the "Grossdeutschland" Corps got into serious difficulties east of the Oder and was obliged to retreat across the river. Glogau now closed its defense cordon on the east side.

On the whole, the Russian advance came to a certain standstill at the beginning of February. The enemy had now reached the Oder in the sector extending from Cosel to Glogau, and had also set up two Oder bridgeheads at Brieg and Steinau, whereas the only bridgeheads retained by the Germans on the east bank of the Oder were those in the fortification areas of the towns of Breslau and Glogau, which had been declared fortresses. The enemy now needed a pause to bring up reinforcements, reorganize his units, and make good his losses, which had been considerable. This pause was also advantageous for the German commands, who thus had a chance to set up a thin Oder front between Cosel and Glogau, and could reorganize their units, supply their armoured units with new material, and also provide the infantry divisions with the meagre reinforcements available.

During the past weeks General Schoerner had asserted his authority in his usual harsh and brutal manner. He had left tactical and operational control to his chief of general staff and had devoted himself entirely to the task of asserting his personal influence on the troops. Day after day he visited the various regiments and divisions and succeeded in strengthening the morale of the troops and in welding them into effective fighting units. He frequently resorted to harsh measures as regards army personnel, removing commanding officers from their posts, where he saw fit, and replacing them by others, and also took drastic steps in the rear fighting zones to round up all shirkers and all those whose units had been scattered.

As a result of the Russian advance into the frontier territory of Lower Silesia east of the Oder, the National Socialist Party district leaders

of Lower and Upper Silesia were faced with two difficult tasks. On the one hand they were responsible for the evacuation of the population from the districts which were endangered by the enemy, whilst on the other hand it was their duty to call up and organize the Volkssturm and use it against the enemy where they saw fit. It was obvious that the Volkssturm, if used against the enemy, must serve a purely military purpose, and that any decision in this respect could not be left to men who, entirely regardless of the fact that the Volkssturm was inadequately trained and armed, merely saw in it a chance to set up a kind of private army for their own personal use. Thanks to Schoerner's sensible attitude in this respect, his command immediately set about rounding up all the Volkssturm battalions which had been posted in readiness to meet the enemy, and assigned them to the various army units and divisions. In this way they were grouped together under efficient leaders and were supplied with arms, ammunition, food rations, etc. Their fighting power was increased inasmuch as they were assigned to subordinate commanders and trained in the use of heavy arms, so that they were now no longer at a loss as to how to act on encountering the enemy. As it was impossible to obtain lists from the Party district leaders indicating where and exactly how many Volkssturm units had been posted, certain officers of Schoerner's command were entrusted with the task of locating all such units and assigning them to the nearest army units. In many cases, of course, it was too late to help, but nevertheless a large number of losses among the Volkssturm men were avoided by the adoption of these methods.

Plans for the evacuation of the population had been worked out on paper by the Party district leaders. It was, of course, imperative that the evacuation order should be issued in time, so as to enable people to leave their homes whilst the fighting front or enemy units that had broken through the German lines were still some distance away. It was the task of the Party district leaders to issue the evacuation orders. In this connection Schoerner's command now intervened, since it alone knew what the military position was and therefore advised the Party district leaders to evacuate a certain district three or four days before the fighting could spread to the district in question. The Party district leaders or their deputies were advised by the Command by telephone so that they could issue the evacuation order without losing any time.

The Party district leaders, however, took their time about issuing the necessary orders. Why they did so, remains a mystery. Maybe it was due to propagandist reasons, economic considerations, personal reasons, or a certain indolent attitude. In any case, they were advised to evacuate the Trebnitz district on January 16th, 1945, but they did not issue the evacuation order until January 21st. The inhabitants of this district were then evacuated on January 22nd, and by January 23rd, the first lot of Russian tanks had already caught up with the rear end of the treks. The same thing happened practically everywhere east of the Oder. On the whole, the population only had a twelve to twenty-four

hour start of the Russian tank spearheads, which, since they were motorized, very soon caught up with the evacuees. In cases where the evacuees came from rural districts and were able to get away in their own conveyances, either by horse, cart, or tractor, the evacuations on both sides of the Oder, provided they were not overtaken by the enemy, were for the most part carried out successfully. The people in the towns were worst off, for they usually received orders to leave the town when it was too late or else, as was the case in Breslau, were fetched out of their houses in a panic, and were then driven along the roads like herds of cattle, without any means of conveyance whatsoever, in a westerly direction. To make matters worse, the weather was extremely cold, and many of the evacuees, in particular children, died of exposure during the treks. When the sound of the cannon in the battle at Gross-Wartenberg could already be heard in Breslau, 300,000 inhabitants of the town were driven out onto the streets, with no conveyances of any kind available, and left to their fate. In Oppeln the evacuation of about one-third of the population was carried out in a fairly orderly manner with the assistance of the railway.

Owing to the fact that the Russian offensive came to a temporary halt at the Oder, the treks which managed to cross the river before the Russians arrived there were for the time being safe, and there were none of the dreadful catastrophes which occurred in East and West Prussia and in the Warthe district. Various committees of the National Socialist Party directed the treks to their collecting areas in the province of Glatz, the Riesengebirge, and the Sudetenland. In a truly exemplary manner the evacuees kept to the special trek roads which the Command had marked out for them to prevent the treks from getting in the way of moving troops. In addition, the Command also saw to it that the population of a 12½ mile strip of territory behind the new German Oder front was evacuated, so that the people would not be caught between the two fronts when the Russians attacked and have to leave their homes when the shelling on both sides had already commenced.

On the whole, there was a certain pause in the fighting along the Oder at the end of January and the beginning of February, with the exception of a few local combats here and there to gain more favourable initial positions. The Russian attack on the Upper Silesian industrial district, however, continued with unabated violence, but the 17th Army resisted with all its strength and stood its ground against the enemy.

Command Centre had received orders to defend the Oder front and the industrial district. It had not been provided with any new reinforcements with the exception of one division, which was on its way from the western theatre of war. Two tank divisions had, however, been withdrawn from the front and were being re-equipped. The Command fully expected the Russians to continue their attack from the Oder bridgeheads at Brieg and Steinau as well as their attack on the industrial district of Upper Silesia.

3) *The Surrender of the Upper Silesian Industrial District in February, 1945*

(Sketch IV)

General Schulz of the armoured corps, who commanded the 17th Army which had been ordered to defend the Upper Silesian industrial district, was faced with an extremely difficult problem. In the course of its retreat on both sides of the Vistula which had been effected under strong frontal pressure on the part of the enemy and persistent attempts to outflank the German forces on the north, the 17th Army had been heavily taxed. Furthermore, its retreat had been rendered especially difficult by the fact that it had comparatively few motorized and armoured units and was obliged to defend itself against the two motorized tank corps and the two infantry armies of the enemy with its slow, horse-drawn infantry divisions. Despite this fact, however, and thanks to the skilled leadership of its general and the tenacity and courage of its divisions, the 17th Army had managed to preserve its unity in the face of the heavy attacks launched by the enemy, and had been able to effect a successful retreat. Between January 20th and 25th, the 17th Army set up its front on the eastern edge of the Upper Silesian industrial district and began to defend this area against the enemy. The southern flank of the Army was to some extent protected by the northern flank of the 1st Panzer Army, which was posted on the southern edge of the industrial region and from which the 17th Army constantly received reinforcements in the form of a few battalions and units which could be dispensed with in the south. The northern flank of the 17th Army, on the other hand, was considerably endangered by the Russian thrust towards Oppeln on January 25th, and had to be strengthened with the Army's own manpower.

The Supreme Command was constantly intervening, and issued threatening orders that the loss of the coalmines and foundries in Upper Silesia was to be prevented at all costs. Bracht, the Party district leader of Upper Silesia, had already issued orders in the industrial area to the effect that the population was not to be evacuated and that no one must leave his place of work, but must go on with his job in order to ensure the maximum output and production at all costs. The only section of the population of Upper Silesia which was evacuated was the rural population in the agricultural areas east of the Oder, and the evacuees in this case consisted mainly of the administrative personnel and workers on the big estates at Pless, Ratibor, and other places. They were evacuated to that part of Upper Silesia which had been assigned to Germany by the Munich Agreement of 1938 (the districts of Jaegerndorf, Troppau, Freudenthal, etc.).

The Russians, who were as fully aware as the Germans of the importance of the coal and steel production of the Upper Silesian industrial district for the German war potential, spared no effort to gain possession of this region. Countless infantry regiments and divisions, supported by preparatory artillery and aircraft activity, launched non-stop attacks

from the east, and fought their way forward, inch by inch, into the densely built-up areas of collieries and foundries, their superior numbers standing them in good stead. Two Russian tank corps, advancing from the north, attacked the Hindenburg-Gleiwitz sector of the front with the purpose of effecting a break-through near Ratibor which would cause the German forces to be cut off from their rear communications. This would enable the Russians to encircle the 17th Army and at the same time gain easy access to the Moravian plain, with Maehrisch-Ostrau at its entrance, which would be forced to yield, once the 17th Army was cut off from its Oder base between Ratibor and Cosel.

The German forces resisted this concentric attack with all their strength. Two thousand feet and more below the ground the miners still continued to mine the coal and load it onto trucks, smoke still issued from the furnaces, and the rolling mills and steelworks still tried to reach their production-level, whilst the German and Russian artillery fire at Myslowitz, Sosnowiec, and Dabrova passed over the collieries and foundries, and the entire region trembled under the impact of Russian bombs, whilst machine-guns poured their volleys into the alleys and streets, and German anti-tank guns fired desperately across the Adolf-Hitler-Canal, as it became increasingly difficult to prevent the Russian tanks from cutting into the flank and rear of the German forces. Each colliery and each foundry changed hands several times before it was finally captured, either by the Germans or the Russians.

At the end of January and beginning of February a certain balance as regards the issue of the war was restored for a brief period by the two German tank divisions which arrived from Hungary. General Schulz was untiring in his efforts to invent and provide new makeshifts and render assistance to the harassed armies, but he nevertheless decided that preparations should be made for the retreat of the 17th Army to the Oder front between Ratibor and Cosel so that the enemy should at least be prevented from advancing into the Moravian plain, even if the Germans failed to retain the industrial district.

On February 8th, 1945, the Russian forces on either side of Breslau once again launched an attack from the Oder bridgeheads at Brieg and Steinau. The situation at the Brieg bridgehead became so dangerous that one of the two German tank divisions in Upper Silesia had to be rushed to the scene. For a few days the 17th Army put up a fierce resistance until it finally came to the end of its strength in the face of the inexhaustible reserves of the enemy. The Russians effected a deep break-through into the towns of Katowice and Gleiwitz, thus closing in upon the German forces in a pincer-movement from the north and south.

The serious danger which would ensue if the 17th Army suffered a complete defeat had long since been realized at Command headquarters, but Hitler refused to listen to the advice of his military staff, and despite all warnings and reports obstinately continued to issue orders that Upper Silesia was to be defended at all costs. On February 10th,

however, General Schoerner, at the urgent request of his chief of staff, Lieutenant General von Xylander, decided to withdraw his troops from the industrial district, despite all orders to the contrary from above, and thus prevent the remnants of the 17th Army from being encircled and annihilated by moving them back to the sector of the front between Ratibor and Cosel. It was high time, too. The withdrawal of the 17th Army and its retreat to the Oder line went off fairly smoothly, but the entire population of this area had to be left behind as the Party district leaders, as has already been mentioned, refused to carry out evacuation measures for economic reasons. As no industrial plants were demolished by the Germans prior to the Russian invasion, they were for the most part undamaged when they fell into the hands of the Russians. General Schoerner himself informed Hitler, who, incidentally, had great confidence in him, by telephone of the measures which had been adopted. Schoerner had expected Hitler to fly into a temper, but all the latter said, in a broken voice, was, "Very well, Schoerner, if you think it necessary. You always do the right thing."

The 1st Panzer Army now took charge of the sector between Cosel and Ratibor where things had become a little quieter, whilst the 17th Army was transferred to the north where the Russians had launched an attack and where a new battle, the battle of Lower Silesia, was now in progress. Eastern Upper Silesia, with its huge industry, which had been built up by the work and toil of the Germans, and its large German population, was practically intact when it fell into the hands of the enemy and of the Poles, who followed in the wake of the Russians.

4) *The Fighting between the Oder and the Lusatian Neisse in Lower Silesia in February and March, 1945*

(Sketch V)

The situation in Lower Silesia from February 8th, onwards became increasingly grave. Despite the fact that the enemy, under the command of Marshal Konjev, had introduced a pause in its operations at about the end of January and beginning of February, 1945, after having reached the Oder front, local fighting, in particular at the Oder bridgeheads at Brieg and Steinau, had continued. At the Brieg bridgehead the Russians had brought up strong reinforcements of infantry and had continued their attacks in an attempt to extend their bridgehead. At Steinau, on the other hand, the Germans had, in the first place, had the lead, as it were, in their attempts to annihilate the enemy's bridgehead. German troops had succeeded in freeing the units defending Steinau which had been surrounded by the enemy, but had been unable to destroy the bridgehead. At Brieg the Russians, in the course of their attacks, slowly managed to extend their bridgehead, and thus captured Brieg and Ohlau. Their attacks on Strehlen, however, were successfully repulsed by the dauntless 208th Silesian Division. Finally, it proved necessary

to withdraw the 267th Division which was still posted on the east bank of the Oder, between Oels and Breslau, for the purpose of protecting the latter town, and to move it to the sector north of Ohlau so as to protect Breslau on the south. The fortress garrison at Breslau now undertook to protect the town on the east bank of the Oder. In this task it was at first assisted by protective forces at Hundsfield, on the road to Oels, and at Protsch, on the road to Trebnitz, but these units gradually withdrew to the actual ring of forts defending Breslau on the east bank of the Oder.

On February 8th, 1945, the Russian armies, under the command of Konjev, once more launched a large-scale attack. Two Russian infantry armies, with the corresponding tank reinforcements, advanced to attack from the Brieg-Ohlau bridgehead, whilst at the Steinau bridgehead an attack was launched by the 3rd Russian Guard Tank Army and the 4th Russian Tank Army, which was followed up by two further infantry armies. As compared to the enemy's superior numbers, the 4th German Panzer Army, which from its position at Goerlitz was engaged in the battle being fought between Oppeln and Glogau, only had a few forces at its disposal, and, moreover, had no reserves worth mentioning. The task of reinforcing the 17th and 19th Panzer Divisions, which had been withdrawn to the region between Goerlitz and Dresden, had not yet been completed. As a result, the 4th Panzer Army very soon began to be placed at a serious disadvantage in the face of the superior numbers of the Russian tanks and infantry forces.

The 208th and 267th German Infantry Divisions, posted at the Brieg bridgehead, courageously and successfully repulsed the enemy's attacks between February 8th and 10th, at Strehlen, Hohenlinden, Klein-Peiskerau, Zottwitz, and Zedlitz, and thus protected Breslau. In the course of an attack launched by the enemy against weak police units and Volksturm battalions, posted along the road between the towns of Grottkau and Neisse, however, the Russians managed to effect a break-through and advanced as far as Friedewalde, nine miles north of the town of Neisse. Here the enemy once more outflanked the 17th Army which was still fighting in the industrial district of Upper Silesia. A Panzer division, brought up from that area, launched a counter-attack and succeeded in recapturing the German positions as far as Altgrottkau, but was unable to recapture Grottkau itself. From Schurgast, northwest of Oppeln, via Tiefensee on the Glatz Neisse, to Altgrottkau-Guhrau⁸ a German northern front was gradually set up once more, which proceeded in a sharp line northwards between Guhrau and Strehlen.

In the meantime, the situation at Steinau had become increasingly dangerous. In the course of one day's fighting the two attacking Russian tank armies broke through the weak German lines. The 4th Russian Tank Army then advanced in a straight line, in a westerly direction via

⁸ The village of Guhrau in the parish of Kuehschmalz near Grottkau, and not the provincial town of Guhrau near Glogau

Lueben, towards the Bober, whilst the 3rd Russian Guard Tank Army wheeled sharply to the south, its left flank advancing towards Parchwitz, and its right flank towards Liegnitz so as to roll up the entire German eastern front. Both armies were followed by strong infantry divisions to support these operations on the flanks and in the rear.

In the course of heavy fighting, Bavarian regiments of the 17th Infantry Division from Augsburg, under the command of General Sachsenheimer, repulsed the enemy's tank attacks at Maltzsch, Wueltschkau, and Gross-Tinz, and prevented the Russians from gaining access to Breslau via Neumarkt, but they were powerless to hold up the extensive encircling advance beyond Liegnitz. Liegnitz was thus captured by the Russians, practically without any fighting, on February 9th or 10th. The 17th German Panzer Division, which rushed to the scene from Bunzlau and had not even been adequately and completely reinforced, arrived too late and was involved in heavy combats with the Russian flank guard to the west of Liegnitz. The 19th Panzer Division, which had been brought up by rail via Schweidnitz, boldly attacked the advancing flank of the enemy at Bluechersruh, Tinz, and Kanth on the motor-highway south of Breslau. A number of Russian tank units had already penetrated to the rear of the 267th German Infantry Division, which faced south and was engaged in heavy fighting to the north of Ohlau. In this sector the enemy had, on February 11th, joined all his forces at the Brieg bridge-head, and then launched a powerful attack at Zottwitz, Schweika, and Wangern. The 267th Division resisted to the bitter end. Attacked from the front and from the rear, it continued to defend the southern access to Breslau for one more day whilst the forces of the fortress garrison of that town took up their positions in the ring of forts surrounding the town. By means of a powerful thrust the 19th Panzer Division managed to break through the encircling Russian forces at Tinz, but was eventually forced to yield in the face of the superior numbers of the enemy. The 267th Division was broken asunder, but, for the most part, managed to fight its way through to the Zobten, whilst the 19th Panzer Division rushed to the aid of the 17th Infantry Division, which in the meantime had been cut off from its rear communications at Neumarkt and Leuthen. Once more, fierce tank combats ensued along the motor-highway, at Kanth, Kostenblut, and Obermois. The Bavarian troops had meanwhile concentrated their forces in a powerful mass, and, under the personal leadership of their general, now advanced towards the enemy, and, in the course of fierce hand to hand fighting, penetrated the Russian lines. These three divisions now defended the Zobten massif, and managed to connect up with the 208th Division, which was still holding out west of Strehlen.

On February 12th, 1945, Breslau closed its city-gates and thus became a fortress, besieged by the enemy. The city was immediately surrounded by a Russian army, which, without delay, launched an attack against the southern edge of the city. The Russian Guard Tank Army promptly wheeled about, and, in a broad front, swept across the country,

which was practically undefended, in order to connect up with the 4th Russian Tank Army, which had meanwhile advanced further towards the west.

The 17th Army which, in the meantime, had retreated from the industrial district of Upper Silesia, was now brought up by the Germans, and attempted to strengthen the front which was being set up in the southern region of Lower Silesia, as a continuation of the Oder front near Oppeln, and which proceeded from Altgrottkau, via Strehlen and Zobten, to Schweidnitz. It was, however, still impossible to stabilize the new northern flank of the army, the command of which now extended as far as Lauban, Striegau and Jauer, and, shortly afterwards, Haynau, Loewenberg, and Bunzlau, were all captured by the enemy. The advance of the Russian troops was, to a certain extent, eventually brought to a halt by the Bober, although this river was only defended by weak German units at Bunzlau and Loewenberg.

To the north of the important rail route between Kohlfurt, Bunzlau, and Liegnitz, the 4th Russian Tank Army supported by strong infantry forces, after effecting a break-through at Steinau, rapidly advanced in a westerly direction. North of Glogau, too, the Russians had already crossed the Oder and surrounded Glogau. The entire civilian population of the town had been evacuated, and preparations were now made for the fortress of Glogau to fight its death-struggle under the leadership of the commander of the fortress, Colonel Graf zu Eulenburg, member of a famous Silesian aristocratic family.

Within an incredibly short time Russian tanks drove through the lanes and clearings of the huge forest which begins west of the Oder and extends on both sides of the Bober and the Queis, and rapidly approached the Lusatian Neisse between Priebus and Forst, thus crossing the western border of Silesia.

On February 12th, General Graeser, who was in command of the 4th German Panzer Army, suddenly moved the troops in his southern sector back to the Queis, namely to both sides of the well-known Silesian military training camp at Neuhammer. He then launched a desperate attack against both flanks of the 4th Russian Tank Army, from Sagan on the south side and from Krossen on the north. This attack which had seemed well-nigh impossible was, however, successful. On February 16th, General Graeser's two columns met near Naumburg on the Bober, thus cutting off the 4th Russian Tank Army, which was already advancing towards the Lusatian Neisse, from its rear communications. The Russians fought desperately to free themselves from the clutches of the German forces; indeed, they actually managed to cross the Lusatian Neisse south of Forst with an armoured advanced guard, but were repulsed in the course of a German counter-attack. For a whole week the Germans warded off the Russians and managed to hold this key-position on the Bober, until the Russians eventually launched a joint attack from the west and the east and succeeded in breaking through the German barrier. The German units

were forced to retreat across the Lusatian Neisse and on February 26th, took up new positions along the river, between Penzig and Guben. The extreme southern flank of the 4th German Panzer Army still retained a ring of positions, five to six miles deep, round Goerlitz. The Russian attack on the extreme northern flank of Command Centre, however, now came to a standstill in this sector, for the enemy's strength was exhausted, his supply lines had become too long, and his losses had been considerable. It was now possible to some extent to stabilize the German front between Oppeln and the Zobten and between Goerlitz and Guben, but the 3rd Russian Guard Tank Army, which had meanwhile been reinforced by cavalry corps, continued its thrusts. Advancing from Goldberg, these cavalry corps, supported by tanks, now attempted to effect a breakthrough to the south, in the direction of Hirschberg. After they had gained about six miles of ground, however, they were intercepted by the 10th German motorized infantry division and repulsed. Russian tanks managed to overcome the German resistance along the Bober, at Loewenberg and Bunzlau, and the enemy now tried to capture Lauban and Goerlitz as initial positions for a thrust in the direction of Dresden. Fierce fighting ensued at Lauban, in particular, between the enemy and German panzer units, but despite the fact that the Russians had already entered the town, they did not succeed in capturing it completely.

The Supreme Command had in the meantime reached certain important decisions, but before they could be carried out the central section of the 17th Army, on about February 25th, achieved its first successful feat of arms in the midst of all the setbacks suffered by the Germans, — a feat which served to reveal to the full the dreadful atrocities committed by the Russians troops.

The 17th Army had withdrawn the 208th Silesian Division from the front at Strehlen and had moved it to Striegau, where the enemy was apparently preparing to launch an attack on the important town of Schweidnitz. The Russians had set up their positions in the Fuchsberge, the hills in the vicinity of the town, which were an important initial position for an attack of this kind. Three Russian divisions held Striegau and the surrounding hills. The 208th Silesian Division now launched an attack against the enemy. It was the first ray of hope in all the long weeks of defeats and setbacks. Within six hours' time the Silesians succeeded in breaking down the enemy's resistance, in capturing the Fuchsberge, and surrounding the two remaining enemy divisions in the town. When the first lot of Silesian assault troops penetrated into the outskirts of the town they realized with horror what had happened to those of the inhabitants who had remained behind, in particular to the women and girls, during the week in which the enemy had occupied Striegau. Despite the fact that the Russians put up a desperate resistance, the Silesian Division recaptured the town the same day as they launched their attack.⁹

⁹ For details see M Bojanowski and E Bosdorf, *Striegau, Schicksale einer schlesischen Stadt*, p 81 ff, in particular Hans Oeding, Brunswick.

When the enemy launched his attack from the bridgeheads at Steinau and Brieg with full force and the entire Oder front from Oppeln to Glogau and Krossen was displaced, the Supreme Command finally decided to supply Command Centre with new reinforcements. From February 14th onwards, new armoured units began to arrive from Berlin and were transferred to the Goerlitz area. Command Centre decided not to use these armoured units — they included the Fuehrer's escort division and the Fuehrer's grenadier division — until they were fully assembled as they would then be able to operate more effectively. The 16th Panzer Division was brought up from the Neisse front, which, in the sector between Goerlitz and Guben, was now being set up by the German forces, undisturbed by the enemy. The 8th Panzer Division was brought up from Upper Silesia, and three infantry divisions were also assembled. On February 28th, these divisions, under the command of General Nehring, launched a frontal and a flanking attack against the 3rd Russian Guard Tank Army at Lauban. The enemy put up a fierce resistance, but the German forces succeeded in repulsing him and drove him back as far as Loewenberg, Naumburg, and Bunzlau. The Germans did not, however, manage to recapture these three towns. But, at least, the enemy's offensive power was now broken in the entire northern sector of Command Centre, and both the 17th Army and the 4th Panzer Army were able to stabilize their front which proceeded from Strehlen, via Zobten Hill, north of Schweidnitz, through Striegau, south of Loewenberg, then east of Lauban and Goerlitz, to the sector between Penzig and Guben on the Lusatian Neisse. The towns of Breslau and Glogau, which had been encircled by the enemy, were in front of this line. Fierce fighting raged in the immediate vicinity of these two fortresses, but otherwise the entire sector of the front between Strehlen and Guben, with the exception of the usual local combats, was perfectly quiet from about March 8th to April 16th, 1945. On April 16th, the Russians began their Berlin offensive at Forst on the Lusatian Neisse.

As long as the mobile combats between the Oder and the Lusatian Neisse continued, the Russians needed every man and every round of ammunition available, and for this reason the small fortress of Glogau was only encircled by small Russian forces — about two divisions — and, for the time being, not attacked. As there was no airport within the fortress supplies of arms, ammunition, food, etc., had to be dropped by plane. At the beginning of March, when a pause ensued along the fighting fronts, the enemy brought up two more divisions and began a co-ordinated siege. For ten to twelve days the German forces put up a desperate resistance, but by the middle of March their strength was at an end. They had, for the most part, been forced onto the islet on which the minster is situated, and the commander of the fortress, Graf zu Eulenburg, now transmitted his last wireless message to headquarters, in which he asked to be informed as to whether he and his men had fulfilled their task of defending Glogau and could attempt a break-through. Needless to say, General Schoerner did not hesitate to give the men who

had defended Glogau so valiantly permission to make this last attempt to avoid annihilation by the enemy. They attempted a break-through in two assault columns, and eight hundred men, under the leadership of their brave commander, managed to get out of the fortress. About fifty of these men reached the German lines at Goerlitz at the end of March. Colonel Graf zu Eulenburg was killed in action, and somewhere in his native soil, between Glogau and Goerlitz, he sleeps the sleep of the valiant and the noble. Of him it truly can be said, noblesse oblige, not for any political party, but for his native country, Silesia.

Fierce fighting still continued at Breslau, which, as the last German fortress on the Oder, put up a desperate resistance against the enemy, who, to begin with, launched his attacks from the south.

The plight of the German population during the three weeks in which a mobile war was waged in their country was most distressing. The cold spell had ended and the weather thus made it possible for the treks of refugees to push on more quickly, but, unfortunately, the speed at which the armoured forces on both sides operated often resulted in the civilians being caught in the shelling, either whilst trekking or in their own homes. Owing to the fact that a twelve-mile zone behind the German front had been evacuated, the treks at first proceeded in an orderly fashion, but very soon, as a result of the speed with which the enemy launched his attacks and advanced, they were thrown into complete confusion, all the more so as the motorized columns of the enemy caught up with them. No one witnessed the dreadful scenes which must have occurred in the huge forests on both sides of the Bober and the Queis, when Russian tanks caught up with the German treks and mowed them down. The only information received in this respect was from a few German reconnaissance planes, which reported having observed massacres of this kind whilst on their reconnaissance patrols and briefly indicated the dreadful fate which had befallen the refugees who were overtaken in this district by Russian hordes.

Most of the Silesian refugees who managed to escape being massacred trekked to Saxony. In the case of most of the treks there were no leaders or persons in charge. As a result, considerable confusion ensued in Dresden which many of the treks had chosen as their destination, in the hopes of finding a temporary refuge there, as the town had so far not been damaged in any way by air-raids. Countless persons who had left Silesia on their own and had not joined the treks had likewise made Dresden their destination, in the hopes of being able to proceed by rail from there to other places. Despite the measures introduced by the Party leaders of Saxony to divert the treks from the town, Dresden was, therefore, crowded with Silesian refugees when the Western Allies carried out their big air-raid there on February 14th. This is not the time and place to discuss what happened during the air-raid, but, at least, the military reason for this operation must be examined. If what is stated in the reports which have meanwhile been published is true, namely that the Russians requested their allies to carry out this air-raid on

Dresden because the Germans were preparing large-scale counter-measures in this district prior to launching a counter-attack, then all one can add is that the most elementary air-reconnaissance would have sufficed to show that the assumption on the part of the Russians was correct only as far as the time was concerned but not with respect to place. It is true that fresh drafts of German armoured units were being conveyed eastwards at about this time in readiness for the battle at Lauban, but they were not conveyed via Dresden but to the north of the town, a fact which any reconnaissance plane could have ascertained with the aid of a camera. Moreover, they were in no way affected by the air-raid, and the German attack at Lauban a short time afterwards began punctually, according to plan. The sole result of the air-raid on Dresden was that one of the most beautiful towns in Europe was completely demolished, its population was made to suffer, and the poorest of the poor, the Silesian refugees, who had managed to escape the Russians, were shot en masse and massacred in the Grosser Garten, Dresden's beautiful park, by the machine-gun fire of low-flying planes.

The big mobile offensive of the Russians for the time being came to an end when the enemy reached the Lusatian Neisse and suffered a reverse at Lauban. It very soon became apparent, however, that the Russians had withdrawn both their tank armies, the main supports, as it were, of their mobile operations, from the front and were reinforcing them. Throughout the entire offensive, which began at the Vistula on January 12th, the German forces as far as manpower was concerned had, so to speak, lived from hand to mouth. During the six weeks' offensive it had been impossible for the German troops to remedy the mistake made by the Supreme Command, namely that it had not supplied the decisive sector of the German eastern front between the Carpathians and Warsaw with sufficient reinforcements and had moreover prevented the forces in this sector from carrying out mobile operations. It was not until the last moment that reserves were brought up, who, together with the German units that had been grimly fighting the enemy for six weeks, managed to intercept the enemy's last thrust and gain a victory at Lauban.¹⁰ Would that this had happened sooner!

5) *The Capture of Western Upper Silesia in March and April, 1945* (Sketch VI)

As compared to the extensive tank operations of the enemy in Lower Silesia, the main fighting activity in Upper Silesia, after the German troops had withdrawn from the industrial district, consisted in the first place in fierce local combats, in the course of which the Russian infantry armies sought to set up bridgeheads at the Oder, between Ratibor and Cosel, as initial positions for larger operations. During the second

¹⁰ For further details on the battle at Lauban see Fritz Bertram, *Chronik der Sechsstadt Lauban*, p 122 ff. Edited by Dr E Piekorz, Simbach on Inn, 1951

half of February they managed to capture two bridgeheads, one between Ratibor and Cosel and one at Krappitz, which they then extended in the course of further combats. The bridgehead between Ratibor and Cosel, in particular, became such a danger, that the northern flank of the 1st German Panzer Army, during the first half of March, 1945, attacked it in the hopes of destroying it. It certainly was narrowed down considerably in the course of this attack, but the 1st Panzer Army units were unable to annihilate it completely.

The battle at Lauban in Lower Silesia was still in progress when, at the beginning of March, the centre of gravity of the enemy's offensive operations shifted to Upper Silesia. About the middle of March the Russians, as had long been expected, launched an attack, supported by strong tank units, against the remaining part of Eastern Upper Silesia which was still in the hands of the Germans, namely the districts of Teschen, Pless, and Rybnik. As the battle at Lauban had meanwhile ended, the German panzer units used there were now available for other purposes. They had originally been intended as relief units for Breslau by Command Centre headquarters, and in this connection the 17th Army was already engaged in carrying out the necessary preparations and reconnaissance. General Nehring's panzer corps, too, was already in the act of moving to the district of Frankenstein, Reichenbach, and Schweidnitz, the area from which an enemy attack, which was to proceed south of the Zobten, was to be made on Breslau. But the danger of a Russian attack in Eastern Upper Silesia, which would most certainly have as its aim a break-through into the Moravian plain and from there into Bohemia, prompted General Schoerner to change his plans. General Nehring's panzer corps was transferred to the district of Teschen and arrived there the middle of March, shortly before the Russians began their offensive. In fact, it got there in the nick of time, and managed to prevent the enemy from effecting a break-through to Maehrisch-Ostrau via Bielitz, although it was unable to prevent the German front in this sector from being moved back to the Jablunka Pass-Olsa River-Teschen-Oderberg-Ratibor line. It was here that the Russian attack came to a halt two weeks later owing to the enemy's severe losses. Then, however, the Russians changed their zone of attack, and now prepared to attack the German front between Ratibor and Oppeln.

The enemy directed his next operations, which began about March 25, 1945, against the projecting bend in the German front in the Oppeln sector. A weak spot had ensued here in the German front owing to the fact that the 208th infantry division had moved from Strehlen to Striegau, and it was now defended solely by police units and Volksturm battalions with a few front battalions as support. The enemy now attacked this sector of the German front with two tank corps and strong infantry forces, and attempted to effect a break-through towards the town of Neisse. The break-through was indeed effected, but the Germans managed to defend the town against the enemy when the latter was within a few miles of it. Thereupon the Russians changed their direction

of attack and wheeled towards the rear lines of the LVI Panzer Corps which was defending the Oder front on both sides of Oppeln. Most of its forces were engaged in successfully warding off the enemy in front of the Krappitz bridgehead, where the Russians had likewise launched an attack, but had only succeeded in gaining very little ground.

Together with its two Silesian infantry divisions, the 68th and the 168th, the LVI Panzer Corps, which had no armoured units at its disposal, however, constituted the southern flank of the 17th Army. On the northern flank of the 1st Panzer Army the Russians had once more launched an attack from their bridgehead between Ratibor and Cosel. It was here that the 18th SS Division, which consisted of Germans from Hungary who were not used to battle, collapsed completely, thus enabling the Russians to effect an important break-through and join forces with the two Russian tank corps advancing from the north. The Silesian divisions at Krappitz and Oppeln had been encircled, and the only way to save them was by speedy action. The commanding general of the LVI Panzer Corps, General Koch-Erpach, who had hitherto been the commander of Army Corps Command VIII in Breslau, solved the problem. Whilst the 168th Division stood its ground against the enemy at Krappitz, the 68th Division advanced by forced marches through the Tillowitz Forest, westwards of Oppeln, in a southerly direction, and finally broke through the enemy's line of encirclement at Hotzenplotz, between Oberglogau and Zuelz. The units which had been engaged in repulsing the enemy at Krappitz followed in the wake of the 68th Division, and the corps thus managed to establish contact with the German lines again near Neustadt and Neisse. Cosel and Ratibor having been relinquished, the German front now proceeded across Western Upper Silesia, namely to the west of Oberglogau, to the north of Zuelz, and to the east of Neisse, linking up with remnants of the 17th Army at Guhrau. At the beginning of April the southern flank of the 17th Army was once more weakened by a Russian attack on the town of Neisse, which was intercepted on the western outskirts by a counter-attack on the part of the Hermann Goering Panzer Division, but finally led to the capture of Neisse by the enemy.

During the whole of April the enemy continued to attack the northern flank of the 1st Panzer Army uninterruptedly in the sector between Ratibor and Neustadt and forced the German troops back, step by step, to the Oderberg-Troppau-Jaegerndorf line. Heavy combats ensued in this sector as both sides fought desperately to gain possession of the terrain, inch by inch. Each hill and each village was contested for days on end until the Germans disengaged themselves from the enemy and set up new defense positions in the rear, a few hundred yards away. As a result, the evacuation of the German population there could be carried out relatively easily. The evacuees, many of whom had already begun to till their land in preparation for the spring sowing, moved to the districts of Troppau and Jaegerndorf in the former Austrian province of Silesia.

By the end of April the whole of Upper Silesia had been lost to the enemy, and the only territory still in the hands of the Germans was the former Austrian province of Silesia, including Freiwaldau, Troppau, and Jaegerndorf, and part of the district of Teschen.

The main brunt of the fighting had been borne by the northern flank of the 1st Panzer Army. The centre section of this army was still engaged in retreating slowly in the Slovakian sector towards the lower Carpathians, west of the Wag Valley, whilst its southern flank had been protecting the southern flank of Command Centre at Bruenn since the retreat of the adjoining Command South to Vienna in the middle of April.

North of the 1st Panzer Army the lines of the 17th Army proceeded from Jaegerndorf in a northerly direction, and at Ziegenhals and immediately to the west of Neisse protected the mountain passes of Zuckmantel and the Glatz Highlands. They were not attacked again after the enemy had captured Neisse. The 1st Panzer Army and the southern flank of the 17th Army did not relinquish these front line positions until May 2nd and during the next three days, until May 5th, when they retreated across South Moravia and Bohemia towards the Bohemian Forest and the Bavarian border.

6) The City and Fortress of Breslau

In the course of the large-scale construction of fortifications and entrenchments which was undertaken in Eastern Germany in the autumn of 1944 and which was mainly due to the initiative of the Chief of the General Staff of the Army at that time, namely General Guderian, extensive fieldworks were set up along the Silesian frontier, and the following towns and districts were declared fortresses which had to continue to defend themselves even though they might be encircled by the enemy: Breslau, Glogau, Oppeln, and the Upper Silesian industrial district as the fortress of Upper Silesia. The first three of these protected important bridges over the Oder and were thus declared fortresses for purely military reasons, whilst in the case of the Upper Silesian industrial district economic reasons were for the most part decisive in this respect. Owing to lack of manpower Oppeln very soon fell, but the fortresses of Breslau and Glogau fulfilled their military tasks to the utmost.

Contrary to the usual method of the Supreme Command of declaring some town or other a fortress arbitrarily and at the last moment, a measure which, incidentally, rendered any systematic defense illusory, Breslau was declared a fortress as early as autumn, 1944, so that the city had a period of about three months at its disposal during which to make the necessary preparations. It was thus possible to strengthen the old-fashioned fortifications of the city, which dated from the last century, by building the so-called Barthold line, and, in addition, ample supplies of food, ammunition, military stores, and fuel could be laid up. Furthermore, it was also possible to equip the fortress with cannon,

although these were not the latest type but consisted of guns which had been captured during the first stage of the war against Poland and France. From the outset, however, the fortress was inadequately garrisoned. No regular front-line troops were available, and the commander of the fortress therefore had to make do with second-line troops, — garrison troops consisting of elderly men and recruits, convalescents, police units, and Volkssturm battalions. These troops lacked the co-ordination and experience of regular front-line troops. As long as the fortress was not cut off from the outside world, that is to say as long as it was merely a position within the German front, these troops would suffice, but if Breslau were actually to be encircled by the enemy and cut off from the German front, then it was obvious that they would never be able to put up a sustained resistance during the major battle which was to be expected.

By the time Breslau became a front-line position about January 25th, 1945, as a result of the rapid advance of the Russian tank armies, much more had undoubtedly been done to prepare the city as a fortress than was the case in towns which were similarly placed. Of course, it must be remembered that the capital of Silesia was not at this time a fortress in the modern sense of the word, nor did it ever become one. Furthermore, the fact must not be overlooked that in this war the value and advantage of modern fortifications was a doubtful one in view of the superior means of attack of modern air forces, tanks, and heavy artillery, as has been proved by the rapidity with which both sides managed to capture fortified lines.

In case of immediate danger the civilian population of the fortress of Breslau was to be evacuated, a measure which was adopted in the smaller fortress of Glogau.¹¹ The National Socialist Party district leader in Lower Silesia, Hanke, who was responsible for the evacuation of the civilian population, did not apparently realize the magnitude of the task with which he had been entrusted and which involved about a million persons. In the course of a discussion which he had with the G. O. C. in C. of Command A in December, 1944, and in which the defense of the city and the evacuation of the population was gone into in detail, there was considerable disagreement between the two men. Thus it was not until the Russian tank spearheads at Gross-Wartenberg were trying to effect a break-through in the direction of Breslau between January 22nd and 25th, that the Party district authorities gave the population of Breslau short notice to leave the city on foot, despite the fact that the temperature was several degrees below zero. Using all the manpower and material at their disposal, the railways endeavoured to assist in the evacuation of the population, but owing to the fact that they were already overburdened with the transportation of military and industrial supplies they were unable to cope with the sudden onrush of hundreds of thousands of per-

11 One-eighth of the population, that is to say about four to five thousand civilians remained behind in the fortress of Glogau

sons. Even so, however, the valuable assistance rendered by all the members of the railway staff, from the president of the railway company down to the shunters, deserves the highest praise. It is true that they were obliged to leave huge crowds behind, but, on the other hand, they did manage to convey thousands of people out of Breslau.

To begin with, the city and fortress of Breslau managed to fulfil the military task assigned to it within the German front. When the front-line troops defending the eastern front of the fortress at Gross-Wartenberg and Oels were transferred to the Russian bridgeheads at Ohlau and Brieg in order to prevent a Russian break-through there, the fortress troops took over in their stead and, from their positions in the Barthold line on the east side of the Oder, prevented the Russian troops at Hundsfield and Protsch from advancing towards Breslau.

About the end of January, 1945, there was somewhat of a pause in military operations in the fortress zone of Breslau. This resulted in many of the inhabitants of Breslau returning to the city from the districts in the Riesengebirge and the regions of Schweidnitz and Hirschberg to which they had been evacuated. Some of them believed that the danger was over, whilst many of them returned in order to collect their household possessions which they had been obliged to leave behind when they had been hastily evacuated.

At the beginning of February General Schoerner appointed Major General von Alfen, who had hitherto commanded a pioneer brigade, as commander of the fortress of Breslau. Major General von Alfen and his troops, which had joined forces with General Nehring's Panzer Corps, had recently succeeded in fighting their way through the encircling enemy units from the Vistula to the Oder at Glogau. Owing to the fact that the leading military command, Army Corps Command VIII, was now responsible for the whole of Silesia, its headquarters were transferred from Breslau to Hirschberg. The National Socialist Party district leader, Hanke, remained in Breslau. As he had been vested with the powers of a Reichs defense commissary for his district, a partition of military and administrative authority, which was extremely unfavourable, resulted within the fortress.

On February 8th, 1945, the enemy resumed his attacks from the Oder bridgeheads at Steinau and Brieg, and on February 12th, finally invested the city. The heavy combats which were to prevent the siege of Breslau have already been described in Part IV of this account. They at least enabled the troops defending the fortress to take up their positions in the defense cordon of the fortress. About 40,000 soldiers and 150,000 to 200,000 inhabitants of the city were now besieged by a Russian army consisting of twelve to thirteen divisions, that is to say four times superior in number to the beleaguered. The only means of contact the city had with the outside world was by air. The airport at Gandau, within the fortress, offered excellent facilities for planes to land and take off. As a result of the combats prior to the city being

encircled by the enemy, the supplies of ammunition and fuel had decreased considerably, and soon after the siege began the position of the troops in the fortress as regards ammunition became serious. Abundant supplies of foodstuffs and other commodities were, however, available. In fact, when the siege began, there were 16,000 pigs in the city's cold-storage depots. Transport of supplies by air could therefore be limited to ammunition and fuel. Very soon, however, the enemy set up a dense cordon of fighter planes and anti-aircraft artillery round the fortress, with the result that the German supply planes were now only able to fly into the fortress by night. The most serious problem as far as the transportation of supplies by air was concerned was the shortage of suitably equipped planes. All the three-engined Junkers planes, type 52, which Germany still had available were rounded up in order to carry out this task as best as they could.

The first enemy attack, soon after the city had been encircled, was directed against the southern front of the fortress. The Russians managed to penetrate into the city and soon captured the district south of Hindenburg Square. Here, however, the German troops put up a desperate resistance, and for weeks on end fierce combats were fought in this area during which the Russians slowly pushed ahead on both sides of the main avenue, the former Kaiser Wilhelm Street, later renamed Street of the SA, in the direction of the main station, until they were finally intercepted at Victoria Street about the middle of March.

It was only natural that the resistance which the German troops put up against the enemy's fierce attacks resulted in a serious situation as far as the German defense was concerned, but this problem was overcome by the expedient measures of the commander of the fortress. General von Alfen began to have serious doubts as to whether the heavy losses of the Germans and the dreadful sufferings of the population, as a result of the air-raids which the enemy carried out uninterruptedly and his artillery fire, were to any military purpose or not, or whether this was merely a case of defense at any price. A conflict ensued on this point between the General, who was fully justified in his doubts, and the Party district leader, Hanke, who was determined that Breslau should be defended at all costs. The outcome of this conflict was that General von Alfen was replaced by General Niehoff. The latter, who had so far commanded a front-line division, assumed command of the fortress at a time when, on the one hand, the Russian attack south of the fortress was gradually coming to a halt, whilst, on the other hand, several German tank units were available for other purposes as a result of the German victory at Lauban. General Niehoff knew that General Schoerner was considering the question of using these tank divisions to relieve Breslau, and he also knew that the 17th Army, which was defending the Zobten massif, was already making preparations to ensure that these units were transferred to Breslau as relief for the fortress. When he assumed command of the fortress General Niehoff was therefore full of hope, which was to some degree no doubt justified. Despite the fact that the

city had suffered so considerably and that heavy fighting continued on its outskirts, he even managed to inspire the troops, who were valiantly defending the fortress, and the inhabitants of Breslau with fresh hopes. A battalion of paratroops, which was brought into the fortress by plane, provided him with a small crack unit with which to tackle difficult situations as far as the German defense was concerned. But the General had been deceived in his hopes. The tank divisions which were to be brought up to relieve the fortress were urgently needed in Upper Silesia to repulse the enemy in his attempts to effect a break-through. Thus the fate of Breslau was really sealed about the middle of March. Apart from tying down twelve Russian divisions, which were thus prevented from operating elsewhere, there was now no longer any true military purpose in defending the city. It was not so much National Socialist propaganda and terrorism which prompted the troops and the population of Breslau to hold out for another six weeks, but some deeper sentiment in the hearts of these people, a sentiment of which they were perhaps hardly conscious during these weeks of suffering. Perhaps they were stirred by the knowledge that this city, which was now at the mercy of the enemy from the vast plains of Asia, had been German for more than seven hundred years, that it had remained German and had defended itself valiantly once before in the course of history when it had been surrounded by Genghis Khan's Asiatic hordes, and that it represented the very heart of European culture and Christianity on the threshold of the vast Asiatic plain. Perhaps these two hundred thousand valiant German men and women felt in their inmost hearts that European culture and western Christianity must be striven for and fought for anew each day in the struggle of mind and sword against tyranny of every kind, and that only a valiant struggle to the end for these values entitles those who fight to bear the torch of Christianity and rekindle it once more at the place where it has been extinguished by a frenzied storm. Perhaps the men and women of Breslau were moved by thoughts and feelings such as these as the enemy closed in around them.

A brief account suffices to describe the tragic end of so much heroism. — The enemy changed the direction of his attack, and now proceeded to launch an attack on the airport at Gandau so as to cut off the city from its means of receiving supplies by air. Fierce combats ensued for possession of the airport which was of so vital importance to the city. Finally, the enemy succeeded in capturing it since his manpower, thanks to inexhaustible reserves, was by far superior to that of the German troops, whose strength was exhausted. The German supply planes were now obliged to drop airborne military supplies. The Party district leader caused part of the buildings in the centre of the city to be pulled down so that a new airport could be built. This was then used to some extent, although it proved to be too small for heavy supply planes.

By Easter, the feast of the Saviour of mankind, which had always been heralded by the joyful peal of countless church-bells in the city, Breslau was being shelled uninterruptedly by Russian artillery and being

attacked by Russian planes. But the Germans still continued to offer resistance. They continued to fire their machine-guns at the advancing hordes of the enemy, whose attacks had now spread to the front on the east bank of the Oder and who was now slowly pushing forward into the precincts of the city on the southwest. German batteries, posted in the streets and on the squares in the centre of the city, still continued to shell the Asiatic assault columns with the little ammunition left at their disposal; German paratroops and units of the Hitler Youth Movement still carried out counter-attacks in the hopes of recapturing important positions; women and girls, boys and old men, still helped with the supply service, and built fortifications and extinguished fires, whilst women members of the signal service still braved the artillery fire and continued to mend the telephone cables which were constantly being damaged by shells.

On April 20th, General Niehoff was informed that the battle of Berlin had begun, and he now realized that this meant the fall of Breslau. As it was, however, he could do nothing in the matter, as the Party district leader still had supreme authority in the city. Incidentally, the latter is said to have left the city and fortress entrusted to his care, by plane at the beginning of May. On May 5th, 1945, Catholic and Protestant clergymen, including the suffragan bishop of Breslau, begged the commander of the fortress to put an end to the dreadful sufferings of the population. On May 7th, the fortress of Breslau capitulated, twenty-four hours before the capitulation of all the German armies. In former times the beleaguerer was wont to allow so valiant an enemy to make an honourable retreat, but in this war the only terms were "unconditional surrender".

7) *The End*

(Sketch VII)

By the middle of April, 1945, it was obvious to everyone at the headquarters of Command Centre that the enemy was about to launch his last decisive attack. In Upper Silesia the northern flank of the 1st Panzer Army was still fighting, inch by inch, to retain the terrain between Leobschuetz, Troppau, and Jaegerndorf. In the sector extending from the north of Jaegerndorf to the front at the Lusatian Neisse, between Goerlitz and Guben, however, all had been strangely quiet for the past six weeks. Only a small region of the two Silesian provinces was still in the hands of the German troops at this time. In the south this territory consisted of a small region of Upper Silesia, on the west side of the Oder, which included part of the district of Leobschuetz, the small province of Hultschin, and the former Austrian province of Silesia with the districts of Jaegerndorf, Freiwalldau, Freudenthal, and Troppau. Further north the Germans still held the province of Glatz, the districts of Reichenbach, Schweidnitz, Hirschberg, and Lauban, as well as that part of Silesia situated west of the Lusatian Neisse, in the Goerlitz area.

Fierce fighting raged in the fortress of Breslau, which was now in the forefront, and there was no possibility of bringing up troops to relieve the city. General Schoerner, the G. O. C. in C. of Command Centre, expected the enemy to launch a new attack about the middle of April on the northern flank of his Command, that is to say, in the Neisse sector of the 4th Panzer Army, and attempt to break through the German front between Forst and Cottbus and then wheel sharply north from there in the direction of Berlin. In addition, another enemy attack was to be expected in the Goerlitz sector, in the course of which the enemy would attempt to advance towards Dresden, the capital of Saxony. The enemy's operations had thus already extended beyond the western border of Silesia. The German front lines were extremely weak. It is true that a last effort had been made to reinforce the front-line divisions along the Lusatian Neisse and three efficient tank divisions had been brought up as reserves in the sector between Goerlitz, Forst, and Cottbus, but these measures could be of little avail to ward off an enemy who had as many armies at his disposal as the Germans had divisions.

In the 17th Army zone, that is in the sector between Jaegerndorf and Lauban, an enemy attack was not expected. For this reason the front lines of the Army were once more extended, and an infantry division was withdrawn from the town of Neisse and moved to the rear of the front of attack, threatened by the enemy. On April 16th, 1945, the enemy launched a fierce attack, as had been expected, against the German front along the Lusatian Neisse, in the sector between Goerlitz and Priebus, and on both sides of Forst. For three days the German front-line troops and reserve units put up a desperate resistance at Forst, the scene of the main attack, but then enemy tank columns managed to effect a breakthrough, and the Russian armies, as expected, wheeled towards Berlin.

Further south, between Goerlitz and Priebus, the 1st Polish Army, which had been newly formed, supported by a Russian armoured corps, succeeded in crossing the Lusatian Neisse, and, despite strong German resistance, swarmed into the Goerlitz area west of the Lusatian Neisse which included the towns of Reichenbach, Niesky, Hoyerswerda, etc. It was here that the German tank units gained their last victory. Led by General von Oppeln-Bronikowsky, who in pre-war days had enjoyed considerable fame as a cavalry officer and tournament champion, the 20th German Panzer Division, supported by all the available units of the northern flank of the 17th Army, now attacked the flank and rear of the Polish Army, from the south, and, in a series of combats between Reichenbach and Bautzen, which was as far as this Polish-Russian thrust had advanced, completely annihilated the Polish divisions, which, incidentally, had been bent on plundering and looting. The Russian tank corps was repulsed in a northerly direction, towards Spremberg.

Thus Goerlitz and those parts of Lower Silesia still in the hands of the Germans were once more saved, but it was the last victory which the German troops were permitted to win, although the 14th German Panzer Army did manage to set up a new front facing north and proceeding from

Penzig on the Lusatian Neisse, via the district north of Bautzen, to the military camp at Koenigsbrueck in Saxony, to the north of Dresden.

By the time the battle of Berlin drew to a close on May 2nd, 1945, the entire Oder front north of Command Centre, from Guben to Stettin, had collapsed and was retreating towards the Elbe. Only Command Centre still clung to the remnants of Silesian territory which it was defending, and, in a curved line proceeding from Bruenn via the lower Carpathians, the Jablunka Pass, Oderberg, Strehlen, Zobten, Striegau, Lauban, Goerlitz, and Bautzen to Koenigsbrueck, protected the rest of Silesia and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia.

The moment when all the German forces would capitulate was fast approaching. General Schoerner now reached a final decision. There was no longer any sense in defending any particular district. The most important thing was to remove as many Germans as possible from the territory which the enemy was about to seize and to transfer them to those German areas west of the Bohemian Forest which had already been occupied by the Western Powers. On May 5th, 1945, therefore, the Command began to retreat along its entire front. It had intended to take the German population in the districts of Reichenbach, Schweidnitz, Hirschberg, Lauban, and Goerlitz along with it, but this proved impossible as the civilians were unable to keep up with the rapid, motorized retreat of the German forces. On May 8th, 1945, the day on which all the German armies capitulated, German rear-guards crossed the mountain-passes at Jaegerndorf, Zuckmantel, Freiwaldau, Jauernig, in the Glatz Highlands, at Landeshut and Liebau, at Oberschreiberhau, Reichenbach, Gablonz, and Zittau, and reached Bohemia, where the entire Command Centre then laid down its arms.

By May 8th, 1945, the whole of Silesia was in the hands of the Russian conquerors, in whose wake the Polish administrative authorities and commandants followed, who took possession of the country. The battle of Silesia was ended, — to be followed by the inhuman expulsion of the population from their homes and their native country, for which they had toiled, suffered, and fought, like all Germans in Eastern Germany.

On January 18th, 1945, two German army lorries were proceeding along the road from Tschenstochau in the direction of Oppeln. The men on the lorries belonged to Command Centre headquarters, which was being transferred from Tschenstochau to Oppeln in order to evade the enemy's tank spearheads. Shortly before reaching Malapane three horse-drawn vehicles suddenly became visible on the dark road, in the dimmed light of the headlamps of the lorries. All three vehicles were heavily loaded and the horses were panting and sweating. A small group of muffled up figures was standing in the road and endeavouring to raise one of the horses which had slipped on the ice. The army lorries pulled up sharply, the men jumped down, and promptly got the horse up on its legs again. They learned that the women and children accompanying the vehicles were refugees from a large farm near Guttentag. One of the

officers then asked the farmer's wife in charge of the trek where they were heading for, and she told him their destination. There was no trace of self-pity in her manner, she neither complained nor asked for help. But when she was asked where her husband was, she whispered in a tragic voice, "Stalingrad". There were three men in the trek, — her drivers, three French prisoners-of-war. The German officer now turned to them and asked them where they came from. Upon their replying that they were natives of southern France, from the banks of the Loire, the German officer wished them a safe and speedy journey home. At this one of the Frenchmen stepped up to the officer, took hold of both his hands, and said in halting German, "I shall pray to God to protect us all." Surely no words could have more sincerely expressed the common fate which binds all Europeans.

Freiherr von Weitershausen.

SECTION II

General Reports

Report No 2

The Expulsion of the Silesians Tragic Scenes on the Banks of the Neisse¹²

The Western Neisse, as the Lusatian or Goerlitz Neisse was designated in the Potsdam Agreement, has decided the fate of the Silesians. The tragedy which is being enacted on its banks is one of the most terrible in the history of the world. The people of Western Germany have little idea of the suffering, famine and distress, of the dreadful massacre, the brutal expulsions and the atrocities to which the Silesians are being subjected. I was deeply moved by what I saw in my native Silesia, and I consider it to be my duty to record my experiences in writing, in the hopes that competent circles will learn of them and will make every effort to help those in distress. I spent seven weeks in the district bordering on the River Neisse, returning to my domicile in Waldsassen in the Upper Palatinate on August 16th, 1945.

On the way to Silesia, on the roads through Bavaria, Thuringia, and Saxony I encountered long treks of Silesians who were returning to their native towns and villages. Stirred by the longing to return home, some of them had left the various collecting areas of their own free will and had set out on their trek homewards. Many of those whom I encountered had been expelled from the various collecting areas which had offered them a temporary refuge; they had been deprived of their ration cards, had been refused permission to stay in these areas, and had thus been forced to set out on the long trek for home. Near Dresden the treks of the Silesians who were endeavouring to return to their native province encountered small groups, and later on, long, endless columns of Silesians moving in the opposite direction, namely westwards. The treks proceeding in the direction of Silesia consisted of covered waggons, loaded up with possessions, and the people accompanying them were full of optimism and convinced that they would be able to start life anew once they reached their native towns and villages. The people they encountered, the expellees from Silesia, however, were dejected and half-starved, and trudged wearily along the highways. Most of them were either dragging handcarts or pushing perambulators containing their possessions. One cart I saw was being drawn by six children, instead of by a horse, and there was a pregnant woman pushing it. Old women of seventy were laboriously pulling handcarts, and I saw some Sisters of Mercy with ropes tied round their chests engaged in the same task. Venerable Catholic priests were toiling along the roads with the members of their parish, pulling and pushing carts. These forlorn and weary

¹² s *Beutraege*, Vol 1, p. 22 ff

crowds kept calling to the Silesians who were trekking eastwards, "Turn back! There's no sense in going on. You can't get across the Neisse! The Poles will take all your belongings from you. They'll rob you like they did us and throw you out of Silesia. Go back where you've come from!" On hearing this, those who were aiming to get back to Silesia grew confused. Many of them refused to believe what they were told and pushed on; others, however, decided to turn back.

When I got nearer to the large town of Goerlitz on the Neisse I found that the roads in the outlying districts were blocked with thousands and thousands of people. It was an indescribable scene of misery and suffering. Notices had been affixed to the trees and the telegraph poles bearing the following words. 'There is a famine in Goerlitz. Despite the fact that the approach to Goerlitz and outlying districts of the town has been blocked for weeks, the number of people is increasing alarmingly. In the rural districts the influx of people numbers 20,000. There are not enough food supplies for the refugees either in the rural districts or in the town itself. It is not likely that the present blockade of the East will be lifted. All local attempts to solve the problem of the refugees have failed. All persons returning home and all refugees are herewith advised to make for places where the food problem is not acute. If you disregard this warning you will probably die of starvation. The Municipal and Rural Administrative Authorities, Goerlitz, June 21, 1945.'

There was no one to take charge of the crowds of refugees. The only instructions issued consisted of a notice to the following effect: "Refugees not permitted to stay. They must move on to Brandenburg, Mecklenburg, and Pomerania." Crowds of refugees were already returning from these provinces, however, with the news that the latter were overcrowded with East Prussians, West Prussians, and Pomeranians who had been expelled from the districts east of the River Oder and that no new refugees were now being admitted there. Military and municipal police were checking up in all the villages and turning out all those refugees who had no permit to stay there. "Move on! Move on!" was the slogan. But it was impossible to find a refuge anywhere and there was no food for these poor, starving creatures. I talked to the priest in Jauernig near Goerlitz who had always enjoyed the reputation of being one of the most charitable men in the whole district. Together with the mayor, he had blocked all the approaches to the village in order to prevent a new influx of refugees. When I remonstrated with him he replied, "There was nothing else we could do. We are having to be hard-hearted. The situation we are in reminds me of a life-boat that only holds six persons but is occupied by ten. Another twenty come swimming up to the boat and want to clamber on board. But if we want to save the ten persons already in it we have to refuse to take the other twenty on board, otherwise the whole lot will drown." This is, of course, logical reasoning, but nevertheless hard on those persons who are in distress and seeking help. It is the task of the entire German nation and, in particular, of the charity organisations to help in this respect.

The streets of Goerlitz are thronged with crowds of refugees from various districts of the Neisse plain, who straggle through the town in a never-ending stream, — famished men and women in tattered garments, who have been robbed of their possessions, and are now dragging or pushing what little they have left on handcarts. I am reminded of a picture by Kaethe Kollwitz which depicts a peasant and his wife dragging a plough.

The inhabitants of Goerlitz resemble living corpses, — deathly pale, sunken-cheeked, and haggard. Normal rations per week when I was in Goerlitz amounted to half a pound of bread, two ounces of meat, three pounds of old potatoes or one pound of new potatoes. I talked to the head of the municipal welfare department, Councillor Giese, to employees of the same department, and to the priests in charge of the three Catholic parishes of the town, Archpresbyter Bollmann, Father Buchali, and Curate Gebel. They were all of them in despair. Everyone is powerless to help. All the local means of assistance have been exhausted. It was obvious that these men, too, had reached the end of their strength. I walked through the refugees' camps, the large municipal halls in which banquets and official ceremonies were formerly held and which have now become the scene of so much suffering and distress. The refugees are provided with a shelter here, but they are only allowed to remain one day. Then they have to move on. There is no food available. Many of the refugees are unable to move on, for their strength is at an end and they are slowly wasting away. Dray-carts come to collect the bodies of those who have died of starvation. I counted sixteen coffins on one dray-cart, coffins of grown-ups and children. And I saw several such dray-carts in the town in the course of the day. A photograph which I took inside the Church of St. Nicholas in Goerlitz depicts 114 coffins, the coffins of persons who died in two days. These figures reveal the terrible tragedy which has befallen the Silesians. I actually saw people collapse on the street, weak with hunger. I talked to people from my native town, including my sister and my sister-in-law. The latter told me that she and her five children have not eaten any bread for the past five weeks, but have been living on turnips which she has been getting out of the storage-pits in the neighbouring villages. My mother has died of weakness. The cattle have been driven out of the villages, and, as a result, the mangels, which were to serve as fodder, are still in the storage-pits. But now that the cattle have gone there is no longer any milk for the children, least of all for refugee children. Nor is there any butter or meat to be had. The longest and densest queues I have ever seen in all my life are lined up outside the foodshops.

The scenes along the banks of the Neisse are evidence of the terrible tragedy which has befallen the population. Notices and slips of paper have been affixed to the trees and on all the houses, bearing words such as the following: "Wohlauers! Family Richard Hoehne has moved on in the direction of Niesky! Anyone who sees our daughter, Marianne Hoehne, please inform her!" In cases like this, the daughter of the family has

usually been held back by the Poles at the bridge over the Neisse, allegedly to help with the harvest, whilst the parents or the other members of the family have been forced to move on. Some of the slips indicate that some soldier, returned from the war and not allowed to cross the Neisse into Silesia, is searching for his wife and children, or else that wives and children have moved on, and have written the direction they have taken on these slips so that the other members of the family, usually soldiers, back from the war, may find them. And countless families have been separated, as slips such as the following indicate: "Guentersdorfers! We have found Family Willi Einert's Hans and Joachim and have taken them along with us. We are moving in the direction of Bautzen towards the province of Saxony. Signature."

The bridges over the Neisse have been blown up. A temporary bridge has been erected, and there is a constant stream of refugees who have been expelled by the Poles passing over it. Polish soldiers on the east bank halt the refugees, plunder the carts, rob the people of their possessions, and take the horses out of the shafts. Dejectedly or indifferently, weeping silently or grumbling loudly at this lawlessness, the refugees move on in the direction of Goerlitz where they hope to find a shelter. "Once we're over the Neisse!" was the thought that all the refugees kept consoling themselves with, all along the long route from Gleiwitz and Beuthen, from Brieg and Ohlau, from Breslau, Oels, and Namslau, from Militsch and Trachenberg, from Liegnitz, Schweidnitz, und Bunzlau, and from the villages in the Silesian mountains. They were driven along the highways for hundreds of miles, they were robbed again and again, but the Neisse was their destination, and they set their hopes on finding shelter and help there. — But now that they have at last reached the Neisse their hopes are dashed to the ground. There is no one who can help them. There is no one who can tell them where to find refuge or who can provide them with a temporary shelter. They are left to their own fate, and are driven on pitilessly from place to place like lepers. I heard one woman say, "Why don't you drive us into a big enclosure like a herd of cattle, surround us with machine-guns, and shoot us on the spot!" And a man from Myslowitz said, "The only thing they let me keep was this rope, and I'm going to hang myself with it before the day's over."

The number of suicides in Goerlitz has increased appallingly. Whereas the number of suicides in 1944 was thirty-eight to approximately 94,000 inhabitants, there were as many as 234 suicides during the first five months of 1945 when the population only numbered 62,000. According to data supplied by the municipal welfare department, the number of suicides during the months of June and July increased fourfold. It is not yet known how many cases of suicide there have been in the rural districts.

Thousands of persons have collected on the west bank of the River Neisse in the hopes of being allowed to cross the bridge. The majority of them are soldiers, who have returned home from the war and are trying to reach their families in the towns and villages nearby. The

more venturesome keep trying to cross the Neisse, and the sound of shots fired by the Polish sentries, who ruthlessly take aim at anyone who approaches the banks of the river, re-echoes day and night. I myself saw three women from my native town shot on the banks of the Neisse.

I walked along the Neisse for about sixty miles and saw the same dreadful sight everywhere. Conditions were worst at the bridges over the Neisse between Goerlitz and Penzig, namely at Lissa and Zodel. Here the refugees were robbed of practically everything. Horses and carts had to be abandoned, and there was one cart standing next to the other in an endless line, for miles. The people who had been expelled from their native towns and villages and then robbed reached the west bank of the river, where most of the girls in the treks were then prevented from moving on with their families by the Poles. I witnessed similar scenes in Rothenburg and at the Neisse bridge in Muskau, where scores of refugees swam the Weisswasser. Millions of Silesians have been driven out of their native towns during the past few weeks. I, too, have suffered the same fate, and all that remains to me of my property, a large glass-works, is a scrap of paper with the following words on it "Certificate. Bearer of this certificate and four persons from Penzig in Silesia are refugees and were expelled and expropriated by the Polish Commanding Officer of the town on June 20th, 1945. Stamp. Signature."

During the seven weeks I was in Silesia I talked to thousands of refugees. None of them believed that the demarcation line is a final one nor that the whole of Silesia, above all the genuinely German territory of Lower Silesia, as far as the Goerlitz Neisse, will be handed over to the Poles. No one believes in such an insane idea. All the refugees are hoping desperately that a reasonable solution will be found and that they will be able to return to their homes. I succeeded in crossing the Neisse twice. I passed through places east of the Neisse which were completely deserted. I eventually reached my native town, which had been badly shelled, and in which there were now only a few Poles, some German artisans, who had been detained, and some farmers. The houses had all been looted. Polish lorries, loaded with furniture which had belonged to the German inhabitants, drove through the streets. In the gardens the trees and bushes were laden with fruit. Only part of the harvest was brought in and large quantities of corn were left to rot in the fields, whilst west of the Neisse people were starving.

The inhabitants of those places in Silesia which were not affected by military operations remained where they were. Many thousands also returned to their native towns and villages when the fighting was over and began to repair the damage that had been done. Fields were tilled and everyone got to work. Then the Poles issued orders that the population was to be expelled. Millions of people were driven out of their homes and their native towns and villages, and were forced to abandon their land, where the harvest was ripe, only to be exposed to suffering and starvation.

*Report No. 3***Hard Times**¹³

It was three o'clock on a Sunday morning. The date was February 11, 1945. We heard a rumbling sound and shots outside our house. Trembling with fear, we jumped out of bed. We were so terrified that we could hardly manage to get dressed. Russian tanks were entering our village. What was going to happen to us?

The first two days things were fairly tolerable. My mother was obliged to hand over any food that the Russian soldiers demanded, and my father was forced to part with his horses. We had a big farm.

On February 13th, in the evening, the lower village was evacuated and then occupied by Russian soldiers. As a result, a crowd of people spent the night in our cellar. There was shooting going on outside the whole night and the fighting front was so near that it sounded as if it were in our village. Next morning, just after we had given the people who had spent the night in our cellar something to eat, some Russian soldiers came to the farm. We were forced to clear out of the house immediately. It all happened so quickly that we hardly had time to snatch up a few things, and all we could manage to take with us was a little food and some bedding. We then fled into the forest, to the two houses belonging to the forest rangers. And here we lived for several weeks, together with hundreds of other persons. There were forty of us in one small room and we squatted on the floor, one next to the other, day and night. Others lay in the stables, in the cellar, and in the barn.

February 15th proved an unforgettable day. In the morning some of the young men went to the village. My father asked one of them to go to our farm and give the poor starving cattle some fodder. When they got back to the house in the forest at noon, they told him, "Mr. B., your farm's on fire!" We were very upset and wanted to try and save the cattle, so my parents and I set off for the village at once. But when we got within sight of our farm we realized that there was nothing we could do. The cows, pigs, and sheep were all at large outside the stables, in the snow, and the fire had spread to such an extent that it was useless to try and save anything. What a tragedy for man and beast! At a nearby house Russian soldiers were beating an old man to death for having tried to protect an elderly woman from being raped. Then we met the Ukrainian who had worked on our farm for a long time and we asked him what had caused the fire. He told us that some of the Russians had got drunk and had gone up into the loft, and that the whole place had then suddenly started burning. We now made to leave the village and retraced our steps in the direction of the forest.

Suddenly we heard shots being fired behind us. We turned round and saw that we were being followed by two Russians. They fired at us and we had to halt. Then they set about beating us and drove us back into

¹³ Report of June 22, 1947, by A B

the village again. They pushed us into a house in which there were some Russian officers. Then the two Russians who had pursued us probably told the officers some lying tale or other, for a second or two later my poor father was dragged away, and my mother and I were forced to remain behind in the house, in which, incidentally, there were a lot of other Germans, too. We were prevented from seeing where they took my father, but some people we knew saw what happened when they took him away and later on told us what they had done to him. They had kept knocking him down and making him get up again, and had driven him on in this way. He had wept and begged them to leave him alone, saying, "I have never harmed anyone." But it had been of no avail, for the Russian soldiers are barbarians. My father was a war-invalid of the first World War and had a stiff leg and a stiff arm. That's how the Russians killed poor defenceless men like him!

For a week we waited in vain for my father to return. Then, one morning, a neighbour of ours came and told us to go to the end of the village as there was a dead man lying there, who could not be identified. When we got there we saw that the dead man was my poor, dear father. He had been murdered in a most gruesome manner — stabbed and slain. His clothing was filthy and covered with blood. His hands were clenched and full of dirt. He had been stabbed in the head. There was a broken gun lying nearby. We were so aghast with horror that we could not even weep.

We were not allowed to bury the dead, and we were thus obliged to sneak my father's body away as stealthily as we could. A neighbour of ours, who, I regret to say, was later on also murdered, helped us to carry the body as far as the forest, and there we then buried my poor father.

Weeks and months were spent in fear and trembling. New atrocities occurred every day. Many of the men were murdered. All those who were able to work had to do forced labour on the big estate, where all the cattle belonging to the farmers had been herded together. Even on Sundays we had to work hard and received no payment of any kind. What little food we still had left was taken from us. The forest nearby was full of Russians, who came in crowds during the day and by night to plunder and to rape the womenfolk.

There was no chance of escape and no one ventured to oppose the Russian soldiers, who spared neither old women of seventy and eighty years of age nor women who were pregnant or had just given birth to a child.

And all this happened in the presence of the poor children of these women. Some of the girls and women contracted venereal diseases and wasted away since there was no medical aid available. If they passed on the disease to a Russian, they were shot.

My mother at that time was suffering from a serious attack of rheumatism and was unable to walk. It was a blessing that she had at least recovered somewhat by the time we were expelled by the Poles, on June 26, 1945. Though it was a hard blow to have to leave our native

village we thanked God for having delivered us from this evil. Pulling a little handcart which contained the last of our possessions, some bedding, since everything else had been taken from us, we toiled along from place to place for eleven weeks before we finally found some sort of accommodation. We had no food, no ration cards, and were forced to beg. We went from house to house and kept begging for something to eat. At night we slept in barns. Those who were able to find work also found it easier to get accommodation. But my aunt and her four children were with us, and no one wanted to take in children. So we moved from one province to another until we finally found accommodation in Halle in Saxony, after we had pleaded with the provincial administrative authorities there to allow us to remain.

We still live in hopes of being able to return to our native village some day. It is only this hope that gives us the courage to go on living, otherwise we should be driven to complete despair.

Report No. 4

A Christian's Experiences in Silesia¹⁴

The year 1944 was drawing to a close. We had passed through troublesome times and we knew only too well that there were more in store for us in the future. And indeed, within a very short time we were trekking along the highways, homeless vagrants. Our town had to be evacuated. Day after day we tramped along the snowed-up roads in the bitter cold, in an endeavour to get to the West. Many of the older persons died on the way and many of the children perished from cold. It was a common sight to see mothers burying the bodies of their children by the wayside — mothers, who were past weeping.

The main stream of those fleeing from Silesia poured into the Sudetenland. No one knew what their destination was. This endless trek which continued on its way day after day bore a dreadful resemblance to a vast funeral procession. Perhaps it would have been better to remain in one's native town or village and face one's fate there. The worst tragedy of it all was that countless families had been separated, and husbands in many cases did not know what had happened to their wives, and mothers did not know what had become of their children, for contact by telephone or by telegram had been impossible some days before the treks had set off from Silesia.

And then the war came to an end. The German troops had capitulated. Everyone was looking forward to being able to return home, but things turned out quite differently. The Czech and Russian soldiers were filled with so violent a hatred against the poor refugees from the East that it almost seemed as if all the forces of hell had been let loose and Lucifer himself were directing the gruesome scenes which were being enacted. Murder, looting, and rape were now the order of the day. And the refu-

¹⁴ s *Beitraege*, Vol III, p 18 ff.

gees who had succeeded in getting as far as Czechoslovakia, with but few exceptions, now lost the few possessions they had managed to save and had been lugging about for months, and were glad to get out of this inferno alive. Some of the Silesians who had reached the border districts of the former Czechoslovakian territory, the so-called Sudetenland, managed to flee to Saxony, whilst others set out on the way back to their native Silesia. Those who had succeeded in rescuing their possessions in Silesia were now deprived of them by the Russians. And those who were lucky enough to escape the Russians were very soon the victims of Polish bandits or Polish soldiers. The misery and suffering had indeed been great and terrible on the trek from Silesia, but now, on the way back there, it was even more dreadful. Russian soldiers brutally and ruthlessly drove their lorries into the long treks of Silesians on the roads. They stole and confiscated whatever possessions they could find. They raped the women they managed to get hold of. They made them work and often detained them for weeks on end without giving them anything to eat, at least not at first. Parents did not know what had become of their children, in particular their daughters, in many cases, and children were separated from their mothers. A human life was worth so little, and the women who were being raped were only Germans! And so many of those who were trying to reach their native towns and villages again never got there but died on Czech or Silesian soil, whilst others came back sick and failing in health and reduced to complete poverty.

I returned to Silesia the middle of August, 1945. How different it all looked when I saw it again. There seemed to be no sign of life in the towns. The Polish element was in evidence everywhere — the Polish language, Polish flags and markings, Polish notices, the purpose of which was to distort historical facts, just as if this had once been ancient Polish territory seized from the Poles by the Germans, just as if it was now solely a case of making good a former wrong.

There were very few people in the streets, and most of them were either Polish railway workers or militiamen. There is something strange and frightening about this Polish militia.¹⁵ It consists, not of soldiers and policemen, but of rabble, — youths, dirty and unkempt, cruel and cunning, who resort to frequent use of their revolvers in order to intimidate the population. Fear in my heart, I walked through streets in which most of the houses had been burnt down. Finally I spotted a female form,

¹⁵ The Polish militia which is mentioned again and again in these individual reports, as can be seen from the appellation, was not a regular Polish military service. It was mainly recruited from youths who had worked in Germany during the war as civilian workers. As will no doubt be remembered, these Polish workers in those days wore a letter "P" on their sleeves. They were allowed to hold divine service in accordance with the regulations of the Gestapo, but the German clergy was not allowed to confess them nor to advise them in spiritual matters. Thus they became entirely demoralized, a fact which unfortunately for the German population later on made itself felt. Many a German clergyman who befriended these Poles during the war was sent to the concentration camp at Dachau.

which inspired me with slightly more confidence, creeping stealthily past the houses in one of the streets. I stopped to speak to the woman, whose face was care-worn and emaciated, and in a few brief words she informed me what the situation was like. She told me that about seventy per cent of the inhabitants of the town had been unable to get away in time, that many of them were now dead, that the menfolk had been interned by the Russians, that approximately eighty per cent of the women had been raped, and that a lot of people had already died of starvation. She warned me to be careful of the militia as they were abducting all the men. Prisoners-of-war, soldiers who had been returning home had been arrested, despite the fact that they had had the necessary identification papers in their possession, and had been beaten and abducted.

I eventually reached the house of my parents-in-law, but alas, there was no one living there now, and there was a notice in Polish on the door, "Requisitioned".

Finally, quite by chance, I found my wife. Pale and benumbed, the tears coursing down her cheeks, she gave me an account of things that I would never have thought possible. To begin with she told me what had happened when the Russians had invaded the town. "There was never a moment's peace either by day or at night. The Russians were coming and going the whole time and they kept eyeing us greedily. The nights were dreadful because we were never safe for a moment. The women were raped, not once or twice but ten, twenty, thirty and a hundred times, and it was all the same to the Russians whether they raped mere children or old women. The youngest victim in the row of houses where we lived was ten years of age and the oldest one was over seventy. A lot of the women committed suicide. And a lot of them are still ill in bed. To begin with we managed to hide in the cellars, but the Russians soon found us. A lot of women who tried to defend themselves were shot in the presence of their families and their children. Some of them were not so lucky, — they were maltreated and then finally raped. When the Russians invaded the town a lot of women and children were simply shot dead in the streets for no reason whatsoever. Wherever the Russians encountered any resistance on the part of combatant German troops the civilians were made to suffer for it. The nuns in one district of the town were all raped and those of them who tried to protect young girls from the Russians were shot. Soon after the town had been taken the Russians started raiding and looting shops and houses, and then finally they set fire to all the buildings. No one can imagine what we suffered. For weeks on end we never left the house. We borrowed long dresses from some of the older women so as to make ourselves look old. We tried to disguise our faces by rubbing them with ashes, but the Russians soon found us out. I always had the feeling that the Russians were inhuman, and I am sure that wild and hungry animals would not have behaved any differently. It is impossible to describe how we suffered and starved. Civilians received no food at all from the Russians. Women who ventured out into the streets were promptly arrested and forced to work. And every Russian

was a king in his own right and could do anything he liked with us. Girls often had to work in the factories for thirty-six hours on end without being given anything to eat, and in addition they then had to submit to being raped at night. The girls in the factories were measured by the Russian soldiers with tape-measures to see whether they were suitable for some Russian officer or other. A lot of the women simply disappeared for several weeks at a time and were forced to help with the transportation of engines, without their families knowing what had become of them. It's a miracle that we are still alive. So far, that is to say for the past seven months we have received no ration cards at all. We often thought we had come to the end of our strength and our resources, but there always seemed to be a way out again.

Three months after the Russians occupied the town the Polish black marketeers set up business here, and to begin with we were able to exchange clothes for food, provided we did this deal in our apartments. Later on, the black market was officially sanctioned, but as the weeks went by we began to get less and less zlotys for the few things we still had left to barter, which the Russians had not robbed us of and which we had hidden. And of course there was always the problem of how to get to the black market without being molested. The Polish dealers were becoming more and more demanding, and the amount of money they were willing to give us for a dress of good material, which had formerly cost about 60 Reichsmark to make, was only enough to buy three or four pounds of butter. The Germans were forced to sell the last of their possessions because they had nothing to eat, and their dire need was, of course, exploited by the Poles by underbidding. To make matters worse, the Russians and the Poles robbed us of our possessions, which were then sold off on the black market for a ridiculously low price.

Finally, after some time, the Poles assumed administrative charge of the town. Our hopes of an improvement in the state of affairs were, however, in vain. All the menfolk between the ages of seventeen and fifty-five had already been interned by the Russians and transported to Russia. A few of them were still detained in labour camps in Upper Silesia. Those who for some reason or other had remained behind in the town were now victimized by the Poles. Germans who had returned home again from the treks were seized and dreadfully maltreated by the Polish militia, which rightly bears the name of the Polish SS and boasts in excelling the German unit of this name. Innocent persons, who had never done anyone any harm, who had never been either members of the National Socialist Party or supporters of the same, and even persons who had actually opposed National Socialism, were arrested on the street and beaten up. The reason given was that they had belonged to the National Socialist Party. No German's life was safe if he appeared on the street. And even at home there was no feeling of security. Windows and doors were barred and barricaded in a feeble attempt at protection."

So much for my wife's report.

The weeks that followed were nerve-racking. We were all of us reduced to poverty. We had long since been driven out of our apartment, and the few possessions that my wife had still had in her handbag had been stolen. Some time afterwards, my eighty-two-year old father-in-law together with his daughter, who was ill, and his two small grandchildren were also driven out of their apartment. Seven militiamen, who had a big sheepdog with them, entered the house and demanded their identification papers, and then, without showing any consideration for the children who were asleep, drove them all out of the house in such a hurry that there was not even time to get the children dressed. They had to abandon all their possessions, even the treasured photographs of their dead. And the sole reason for all this was simply that they were Germans and that the Poles had taken a fancy to their apartment. Every day whole streets of apartments occupied by Germans were seized by the Poles; the inhabitants were driven out and rendered homeless, or else were sent to camps where they slowly wasted away. The Germans were deprived of their rights, expropriated and outlawed. It was easy to tell who was German, for as a rule they only appeared in the streets either early in the morning or in the evening hours since, during the rest of the day, they were in constant danger of being arrested on the street and being taken off for a day or longer, as the "rulers" saw fit, to do forced labour. Naturally all German women, even those who had small children at home, had to do forced labour. They had to assemble at a certain time every day and, under the escort of armed militiamen, were then taken to the place where they had to work. The German inhabitants of the town could easily be recognized by their outward appearance, for they were pale and emaciated and they hurried timidly through the streets, always seeking shelter as quickly as they possibly could. Each day brought new hardships. How long would this state of affairs continue? People were turned out of their homes and had to leave all their possessions behind, all they possessed, if they were lucky, were a few small odds and ends they had managed to bury somewhere. The Germans had no chance of earning a living since they were not allowed to work for wages. Ration cards were not issued to Germans in Upper Silesia and German money was not accepted as legal tender. On the other hand, however, the price of all consumption goods was exorbitant. Everything was to be had and as much as one desired, — fancy cakes, chocolate, ham, sausage, etc. But the Germans were glad of a few turnips they had managed to beg somewhere. If they managed to obtain a few potatoes somewhere out in the country, these were usually taken from them by the militiamen and trampled on. And if they went to gather lumps of coal on the railway tracks outside the goods station the Polish militia usually chased them off, using violent oaths and swearwords, or else locked them up. In short, everything was prohibited as far as the Germans were concerned. They were doomed to die a slow, lingering death, and day by day the spectre of starvation came nearer and nearer. To judge from the way they were treated by the Poles, one could have assumed that these Germans were war-criminals. On the contrary, however,

they were for the most part innocent children, old men, and women, — there were hardly any German men left in the town — and they had never been members of the National Socialist Party, in fact some of them were quite well-disposed towards the Poles and had even helped the latter in former times and had condemned any unjust behaviour towards them on the part of the Germans. These Germans, who had returned to Silesia or had in the first place remained there, had nothing to be ashamed of. I often heard people say, "How long will this state of affairs continue? The rest of the world surely cannot allow things to go on like this. Why isn't the world told about what we are suffering here? There's always been such a lot of talk about freedom, independence, and co-determination, and such like." It was touching to see how the Germans in Silesia hoped for help and support from the democratic countries.

A Journey through Upper and Lower Silesia

From Upper Silesia I travelled through numerous districts of Silesia. What I saw made my heart bleed. Thousands, in fact millions of people, on the one hand, are dying of starvation, whilst, on the other hand, acres of fertile soil are uncultivated, and the corn is rotting in the fields. There are no farm labourers at work anywhere on the land. The fields are overrun by mice and rats, carriers of disease. Now and again one sees a herd of cows guarded by Russian soldiers, but on the whole there are hardly any horses and cows at all. Practically everything of value has been confiscated by the Russians and anything they happen to have left behind has been seized by the Poles. In the district of Hirschberg for instance, an area in which there was no fighting, only ten per cent of the cattle was left by the beginning of September, 1945, according to an estimate by one of the farmers there. Whereas the tramcars and trains in Upper Silesia may not be used by Germans, and the fares have gone up very considerably (4 Reichsmark per mile instead of 8 Pfennigs as formerly, and the fare on the tramcars 20 Reichsmark instead of 35 Pfennigs as formerly), and Polish money is the only legal tender accepted, conditions in Lower Silesia on the other hand are different. In certain districts there the trains are so crowded that the people sit on the roofs of the coaches, on the footboards and engines. And the trains are used mainly by the rabble that has developed a special skill in stealing.

In Lower Silesia, at the beginning of September at least, German money was still to some extent the legal tender. Then, however, Polish currency was introduced, and railway and tram fares were scaled according to Polish tariffs. At the same time the ration card system, which had at least ensured that the Germans received some bread, was abolished in Hirschberg, and the black market was officially sanctioned. The Germans, who, owing to the fact that they were in the majority in this district, were allowed to speak German, were compelled to wear a white band on their sleeve. I found the same conditions everywhere. Hunger

and fear can be read in the people's faces. What happened months ago in Upper Silesia is now being repeated here. An influx of Polish elements is spreading from south to north. Every day thousands of Poles stream into the German towns in Lower Silesia. They seize what they like and settle down where they like. Within a couple of minutes, business firms and farms change hands, for all the Germans have been expropriated. And the state of chaos which has ensued is indescribable. Silesia has become the country of absolute lawlessness. The Poles reign supreme. They continue to search the houses occupied by Germans in order to ascertain whether the latter still have any possessions left. The Poles are of the opinion that they can prove the allegedly Polish character of Silesia best by affixing notices in the Polish language everywhere in this ancient German territory, and all the streets have long since been given Polish names. The Poles are being exhorted again and again to settle in Western Silesia in order to prove to the rest of the world that Poland needs this territory. And they are told that this is the promised land as far as they are concerned. But the same number of Polish settlers that arrive in the towns day by day leave them again as soon as they realize that there is nothing much to be had in Silesia.

It is a common sight to see mothers carrying the dead bodies of their children, wrapped in a sheet, to the cemetery, for coffins are not to be had, that is to say it is impossible to pay the price of a coffin, and the rate of mortality is extremely high. Epidemics are steadily increasing, and many Germans have already died as a result. There is a great shortage of medicines and drugs and they are extremely expensive. The black market continues to flourish and prosper. The Poles would find it impossible to live on what they earn, for their income is by no means in proportion to the prices; for this reason they are obliged to rely on black market deals, that is to say on stealing German possessions and selling these on the black market. In a little while, however, the Germans will be completely impoverished, and then starvation will begin to make itself felt among the Poles, too. I was told that the Russians have refused to release grain supplies. The land will therefore yield no crops during the coming year, and potatoes and corn have already been confiscated by the Russians. The situation in Silesia is a peculiar one, one might almost say a tragicomedy, though for the Germans it is a cruel one and such that there is no way out. Both the Russians and the Poles resort to looting. Sometimes the Russians pose as the defenders of the Germans and are called in by the latter to protect them against the Poles. Very often, however, the Russians and the Poles carry out their looting raids at the same time.

Meanwhile, I have returned to Upper Silesia once more. Conditions are still unchanged, and the position of the Germans is becoming more and more unbearable. Many Germans have already left. Every night one can hear Germans calling for help because the Poles or Russians are looting their homes. After all this time I still hear the beseeching cries of "Help, help!... na pomoc... na pomoc!" Those Germans who de-

cide to leave their native Silesia usually do not even get as far as the station, without being molested and robbed of the few possessions they are officially allowed to take with them and of their money by the militiamen. Sometimes they are even robbed by the railway police, and it is quite a common sight to see Germans give the Polish soldiers money so that the latter will accompany them to the train and protect them against being molested. And the Germans who do eventually manage to get safely into the train never know whether they will not be made to get out again at the first opportunity and be robbed. Bandits often suddenly enter the trains en route and rob the passengers, in particular on the route between Liegnitz and Kohlfurt. And the Germans always fall a prey to this rabble. The bandits disappear as quickly as they came, despite the fact that the train is travelling at full speed. And conditions on the route between Kohlfurt and Goerlitz are just the same. There are groups of bandits, consisting of Russians, Poles, and Ukrainians, lying in wait, everywhere and though these groups may be hostile towards each other they have one common aim at least, namely to rob the Germans. Those Germans who manage to cross the Oder-Neisse line heave a sigh of relief.

I have pondered on the problem of the Germans in Silesia deeply and seriously. So many of them are heroes and martyrs. The Lord will surely not abandon these creatures who have been ennobled by their sufferings and sacrifices. It is amazing and touching to see how they help each other, how they share their last slice of bread with men who have been prisoners-of-war and are now tramping from place to place, seeking their families, and even give up their beds to them. Here truly we find a revival of the spirit of early Christianity. Despite their own misery and poverty the people of Silesia and Upper Silesia have done everything within their power to help their prisoners-of-war and internees and this, in view of the unreasonableness and inhumanity of the Polish militia, was most imperative and necessary in many cases. I remember one occasion on which some German women gave bread and water to the wounded soldiers of a German transport and Polish militiamen knocked it out of the soldiers' hands. I have often wondered why it was that Silesia, which until shortly before the war ended, as compared to Western Germany, had little to suffer, was afterwards so grievously afflicted. Is it an unduly severe punishment for some injustice committed, or has God chosen the people of Silesia as being the race most fitted to atone for the wrongs committed by mankind? There is no reason to assume it is precisely Eastern Germany which bears the main blame for the war. On the contrary, election results and in particular the results of the Reich presidential elections in 1932 indicate that Silesia voted against Hitler. And Silesia's attitude as regards the revolt of July 20, 1944, proves that Silesia was not to blame for the war. It was precisely in Silesia that the anti-National Socialist movement was particularly strong. In view of the historical development of Silesia, who would venture to maintain that it is not a German country? Did not Poland in the year 1335 by the Treaty of Trentschin renounce all claims to Silesia "for all time"?

Silesia was German before ever America was discovered. What would America say if all the people who were not Red Indians and all those who settled there after the country was discovered were suddenly driven out? And furthermore it is doubtful whether America was taken from the Red Indians by more peaceful means than Silesia from the Poles.

The Polish rulers of Silesia in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries themselves invited Germans to settle in the country. And it was a leading Polish personality, von Stablewski, the Archbishop of Poznan and Gnesen, who as recently as 1890 declared that it was unjust and wrong to include Upper Silesia in the Polish sphere of interest, since the people of Upper Silesia had never considered and never would consider themselves Polish. And the Upper Silesian plebiscite in 1921 was clearly in favour of Germany. We are well aware of the regrettable fact that Poland was obliged to cede a considerable part of her territory to Russia in 1945. It is perfectly comprehensible that Poland should seek some other territory to replace what she has lost, but two wrongs do not make a right, and Poland is not justified in driving the Germans out of their native Silesia. Even Polish propaganda cannot alter, reconstruct, and distort historic facts which have been recorded in all the greatest works of history. A wrong remains a wrong and it is all the same who commits it.

Christians all over the world, do you intend to look on in silence whilst wrong continues to be committed? A wrong remains a wrong and two wrongs do not make a right, — it makes no difference who commits the wrong. Many of you all over the world have severely condemned the wrongs committed in the German concentration camps, and like all decent-minded persons have demanded atonement for them. The time has now come for you to have the courage to condemn openly the wrongs which are being committed in Eastern Germany and to denounce the vast concentration camp which constitutes Eastern Germany. Those who now look on in silence are accessories to crimes which can in part be prevented or else, in those cases where they have already been committed, must be atoned for. A real and lasting peace will only be possible if Christian principles in Germany and all over the world determine politics.

And when this has been achieved we shall no longer need to fear for our native Silesia, for Germany and Europe, since all problems will then be solved according to the principles of right and justice and in the interests of everyone and of worldwide peace.

Report No. 5

The Fate of Silesia and the Silesians during the Past Few Years¹⁶

On Monday morning my parents and I decided to try and flee after all. The Russians were now only about a quarter of a mile away, on the far side of the River Malapane. The streets were under Russian artillery fire and we were therefore obliged to escape by field-paths. We found

¹⁶ s *Beitraege*, Vol III, p 56 ff The report deals with Klosterbrueck, Upper Silesia

it hard going, for the paths were snowed under and we were burdened with bicycles and sleds containing our possessions. We managed to trek about fifteen miles, however, and next morning we reached a lonely farm, a long way off from any villages and surrounded by forest on all sides. Here we learned that further escape was impossible as the Russians had already encircled the farm at some distance away. We were constantly under Russian fire for two whole days, until the night of January 25, 1945, when Russian soldiers suddenly stormed the farm and forced an entrance. After searching the house for German soldiers they drove us all into the sheep-shed. There were about one hundred and fifty of us, and we lay there on the straw, crowded together. Only about one-third of this number were Germans, the majority were Polish farm-workers. Fierce fighting raged round the farm. Sometimes the German soldiers advanced to within a few yards of the building, but they were always thrown back again. Meanwhile we kept hoping to be freed. All the possessions we had had with us had already become the property of the Russians. On the second day a savage-looking drunken Russian appeared and ordered my father and two other men to go with him "to work". We realized at once that father's last hour had come and we said farewell to him for ever. Soon afterwards we heard three shots ring out. On the afternoon of the third day some of the womenfolk, including my mother and me, were taken away by the Russians to work for them. We were forced to drag heavy beams of wood long distances through the snow and repair the snipe holes in the front line. Perhaps it was then, for the first time in my life, that I truly realized the significance of the sacrifice of "Him who bore the heavy Cross for our sake". The shells of the infantry and artillery kept bursting incessantly all around us, but this fact no longer troubled us, for death now held no horror for us. During the night we were then driven off the farm by the Russians because they were afraid some of us might be spies. They told us to go back to where we had come from. We had not had anything to eat for three days, and most of us were in a state of collapse, not only as a result of hunger but also due to the physical and mental anguish and exhaustion of the past few days. The whole sky was aglow with flames, for the Russians were passing through the countryside setting fire to everything and murdering the inhabitants, just as the Tartars had done seven hundred years previously. We strayed about in the front fighting lines in the hopes of encountering a German unit. But our hopes were in vain. And after wandering about for three days we finally reached our native village, which was sadly changed in appearance. Russian tanks rolled along the streets in a never-ending column. And the first acquaintances we met told us the dreadful news. The majority of those who had not fled when the Russians captured the village had been brutally murdered. It was later ascertained that in our village alone about one hundred and fifty persons, including men, women, and children, had been murdered. In those early days the Russians made no exceptions whatsoever. One hundred and twenty houses and barns, including our house, too, had burnt down. The church had only been slightly damaged by shells, but

hordes of Russian soldiers had looted the interior. Almost all the women and girls, with the exception of four or five who had managed to find a safe hiding-place, had been raped, and here, too, these barbarians had spared no one, neither twelve-year old girls nor women of seventy.

For ten whole weeks the fighting front was located along the Oder. And the inhabitants of our village, since it was situated in the Russian front lines, experienced all the cruel hardships and terrors of war. The women and girls suffered most, for they were raped time and time again by the Russians, and their mental anguish was beyond human endurance. After ten weeks of fighting the Russians succeeded in breaking through the German defence, and the Russian fighting troops left our village and moved on.

Hardly had they gone when the Poles streamed in from the east in order to occupy "their" territory. They began to persecute the Germans by methods which were often even more brutal than those applied by the Russians. Camps were set up all over the countryside, and here the Germans were kept in captivity, starved, and often cruelly and brutally ill-treated, beaten and mishandled. I myself spent ten weeks in the Polish camp at Lamsdorf near Falkenberg, Upper Silesia. Lamsdorf, incidentally, was reputed to be the most dreadful of all the Polish camps, and the men interned there were treated worst. The Poles seem to have a gift for inventing the most brutal forms of torture. Some of the Germans interned there were beaten to death or shot, others died as a result of the ill-treatment they received, whilst many died either of starvation or of typhus, which at that time was raging in the camp.

The "evacuation" of the Germans in the district of Lamsdorf was conducted by particularly brutal methods. Polish soldiers surrounded the entire village with machine-guns whilst another batch of soldiers drove out all the inhabitants. No one was allowed to remain behind, and not the least consideration was shown, either towards the aged, the sick and the dying, or towards mothers with small babies. The inhabitants were allowed to take as many possessions with them as they could carry, but once they were in the camp everything was taken from them and they were not even allowed to keep a change of underclothing. In the district of Falkenberg one village after another was evacuated in this manner and the inhabitants were detained in the Polish camps. Later, after they had been deprived of all their possessions, the Germans were then herded into cattle-trucks and taken to Western Germany in transports which consisted of as many as one thousand five hundred persons.

SECTION III

Events in Upper Silesia¹⁷

- 1) Beuthen
- 2) Gleiwitz
- 3) Hindenburg
- 4) Kreuzburg
- 5) Rosenberg
- 6) Cosel
- 7) Ratibor
- 8) Leobschuetz
- 9) Oppeln
- 10) Neustadt
- 11) Falkenberg
- 12) Grottkau
13. Neisse

*Report No. 6***Beuthen, Upper Silesia¹⁸**

In 1945 the town of Beuthen, Upper Silesia, included six Catholic parishes and two curacies with a total of 85,000 Catholics (1942)¹⁹ and 10,000 persons of other denominations (1929). The oldest church in Beuthen is mentioned in historical records as early as the year 1253. The present Church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary was built in the sixteenth century. The choir dates from the thirteenth century, the east side of the nave was extended in the nineteenth century. The so-called Minorite Church was built in the thirteenth century and has been Protestant since 1856, the Minorite monastery being secularized in 1810. Holy Ghost Almshouse was founded in 1299, and the present church of that name was built in the year 1721.²⁰

On January 28, 1945, the Russians entered the town. Most of the inhabitants were extremely relieved that at least the shelling had now ceased, but relief soon gave way to fear as reports of what was actually happening in the town reached their ears. Houses were broken into and looted. Girls and women were in constant danger of being abducted by the Russians. Every night scores of women and girls sought refuge both at the

¹⁷ The following reports have been compiled in keeping with the chronological order of events

¹⁸ s. *Beitraege*, Vol. II, p. 812 ff

¹⁹ The statistics pertaining to the number of Catholics, as quoted here and in the following reports, are taken from the *Handbuch des Erzbistums Breslau für das Jahr 1941* Breslau

²⁰ The data contained in the preliminary remarks on the various parishes and pastorates have for the most part been taken from the *Real-Handbuch des Bistums Breslau*, Pt II, p. 35 ff, Breslau, 1929, and the *Handbuch für das katholische Schlesien*, p. 77 ff, Munich, 1951

Cripples' Home and the nearby convent. Russian soldiers entered the kitchen at the Cripples' Home and demanded food and gin, but on the whole they behaved fairly quietly. They made the janitor get undressed, searched him, and then stole his valuables.

Looting continued for weeks on end. And it was a common sight to see Russian soldiers on the streets, trying to learn how to ride a bicycle. What struck one most was that the Russians, strange to say, were kind to children. They often gave food to starving children and even gave them rides in their cars or on their bicycles. They were particularly fond of employing boys of about ten to twelve years of age as stable-boys, and in some cases, as a result of the dire need of the population, literally bought them from their parents. The Russian troops also included a large number of women and girls in uniform, most of them armed. Medical service in the hospitals was run mainly by women. Male and female patients were put in the same wards. There was also a temporary women's ward at the Cripples' Home in which, according to statements made by the sisters employed there, abortions were performed regularly.

Report No. 7

The Parish of Martinau, near Beuthen, Upper Silesia²¹

According to the last official ecclesiastical census in the year 1940 the parish of Martinau included 7,000 Catholics and approximately 100 persons of other denominations (1929). The Church of the Heart of Jesus in the baroque style was built in 1911 and the parish was founded on November 1, 1913; Martinau formerly belonged to the parish of Mechtal, Upper Silesia.

Very soon we, too, heard Russian soldiers knocking on our door in the middle of the night with the butt-end of their rifles and shouting "Otwirai!" — a word that I was to hear scores of times in the near future. "Open the door, open the door at once!" The men outside who had already ravished women and girls in the village that afternoon were like wild beasts. I moved towards the door in order to open it, but was prevented from doing so by a young woman who lived in the flat next-door. This delay of a few moments sufficed to infuriate the Russians to such an extent that they began firing incendiary ammunition. The house was a semi-detached one, separated from the adjoining house by a fire-proof wall. Four or five women and about ten children lived in the house next-door, and they were at present all assembled in the cellar. The house was ablaze, and their only means of escape was to crawl through an opening in the cellar-wall and join us. Whatever were we to do? We were not allowed out on the streets because of the state of siege. Despite this fact, however, our old housekeeper left the house and ran all the way to the commandant's office, and finally returned, accompanied by two Russian officers.

²¹ s. *Beutraege*, Vol. II, p. 527 ff.

Meanwhile, we had looked out of the window and ascertained that the two men who had set fire to the house were Mongolians. They promptly disappeared when they saw the two officers approaching. The latter took in the situation at a glance, opened the cellar-windows, and ordered me to give them a shovel. Unfortunately, I could not comply with their request as I was a visitor in the house and did not know where the shovel was kept. And the womenfolk took no notice of my request when I asked them to get me a shovel. I was in a somewhat dangerous predicament for the officers began to get angry with me, and one of them said, "You not want help put out fire! You set house on fire yourself!"

The other officer then ordered us to leave the house and go along to the guardhouse. We hastened to obey this order and left the burning house. To my great sorrow I was obliged to leave my wedding ring behind as I had previously hidden it under the kitchen-stove. I was deeply grieved at this loss at the time, though actually, by a strange coincidence, I later got my ring back again. When we arrived at the guardhouse we were all herded into a room which contained a double bed and a cot. The women and children lay down on the beds whilst I squatted in a corner of the room. After a short time the children stopped crying and fell asleep. The women conversed in whispers and bewailed the loss of their possessions. After a while I dozed off.

About two hours must have elapsed and it must have been about midnight, when I woke up again. All was quiet in the house save for the occasional sound of a door being closed or opened. Suddenly the door of the room we were in was opened and some soldiers entered. One or two matches were struck and I saw that there were about eight Russians in the room who were obviously looking for women.

As I crouched there in my corner I saw one of the Russians coming towards me. The match he held in his hand went out. I felt, rather than saw, a hand reach out towards me. I had a fur cap on my head, and suddenly I felt fingers tracing curl-like movements on my temple. For a brief moment I did not know what to make of this, but the next instant, when a loud "No" resounded through the room, I thanked God with all my heart that I was not a woman or a girl.

Meanwhile the beasts had spotted their victims and shared them out. Then they suddenly started shooting at random. But it was dark in the room and no one could see where the shots were being fired or who was hit. I heard wails and groans and voices calling out to me to help, but there was nothing I could do. Right next to me poor defenceless women were being ravished in the presence of their children. I thanked God for having created light and darkness and thus sparing me a sight which my pen refuses to describe.

The shooting continued. Then, suddenly, in the midst of all the confusion the order was shouted, "Everybody out of the room!" Someone brought a light. There was a Russian standing by the door pointing a

revolver at us. We all surged towards the door. Strange to say, we were all of us still alive. There was no one lying on the floor in a pool of blood. The bullets had all stuck in the ceiling! I was the last to reach the door. I had a strange feeling that death was very near. The Russian standing by the door with a revolver in his hand shouted something or other at me. I could not understand what he said. I walked on calmly without turning round, and prayed silently, "Blessed Virgin, Holy Mother, be Thou with me in my dying hour".

The Behaviour of the Russians is Incalculable

The following scene was observed in our village. An old woman was pushing a rickety handcart, containing a sack of corn, through the village street. On the way to the flour-mill some distance away one of the wheels broke. At this very moment a Russian lorry was seen to be approaching from the opposite direction. It came to a halt, and some soldiers got out. It was to be assumed that, in keeping with their usual methods, they would now deprive the old woman of her sack of corn. But no, quite the contrary in fact! They started trying to repair the broken wheel. When all their efforts had proved of no avail they loaded the old woman, handcart and sack of corn onto their lorry and drove her to the flour-mill which was about ten minutes' distance away.

The following was related to me by my sister. A Russian soldier gave her three-year old little boy a large coin of solid gold as a present. The next Russian who came along, however, promptly took it away from him.

One Russian soldier remarked, "Why you war? In Germany is everything. Here more to be taken out of one house than in our country out of whole village!"

Russian soldiers came to the vicarage and forcibly removed a handcart belonging to my sister-in-law. All protests were of no avail. As they hurriedly left the vicarage the Russians casually remarked that there was a broken-down handcart on the street which we could have for the one they were taking. When we went to get the broken-down handcart we discovered to our great surprise that it was loaded with a lot of straw and two pigs.

Report No. 8

Gleiwitz, Upper Silesia ²²

In 1945 the town of Gleiwitz included fourteen Catholic parishes with a total of approximately 104 000 Catholics (1942) and about 12,000 persons of other denominations (1929). The oldest church in Gleiwitz which is mentioned in historical records of the year 1286 is All Saints. Presumably this church already existed as early as 1250. The present church was built in 1504 in the Gothic style. The Church of the Holy Cross was likewise built prior to 1500; from 1612 onwards it belonged to the Franciscan monastery, being rebuilt in 1686 in the baroque style. In 1810 it was secularized. From 1816 onwards the Catholic Grammar School

²² s *Beitraege*, Vol III, p 626 ff

was housed in the monastery. In 1921 the church belonging to the monastery was transferred to another religious order and has since been extended. The Church of St Bartholomew is mentioned in records as early as 1447 and it presumably already existed at the end of the thirteenth century. The present church was built during the years 1907 to 1910.

Dear Miss Charlotte,

I am sure you will be waiting for news from Gleiwitz. All I can say before I begin to tell you the news is that you can thank the Lord that you left in time. It is quite impossible for me to relate in brief what the population there had to suffer. It all sounds so unbelievable and yet it is all perfectly true. Something new happened every day, in fact every night, too. We never had a moment's peace. Some days the most dreadful incidents occurred, which are best forgotten. It all began with the terrible battle waged for the town, — the artillery fire, the whining of the Russian mortars, the whole town ablaze. We crouched in the cellar, terrified to death, expecting the house to collapse at any moment. On Tuesday evening, January 23, 1945, at half-past eight, Russian troops marched through the streets in our district of the town. I can still clearly remember the dreadful feeling I had as the first Russian troops came past and shelled the houses. On Saturday, January 27, 1945, the town capitulated and the Russians triumphantly took possession. You can imagine what our feelings were as we watched these savage-looking hordes marching past. A time of great suffering now began for all the women and girls in the town. Thank heaven, we were spared the dreadful anguish of being ravished by the Russians. Things were by no means easy for my mother, for very often she did not know where to hide us. For six whole weeks we were pent up within the house and no one knew that we were there. Not a day passed but the Russians searched the houses several times, including the flats, cellars, and attics. And they had a different excuse every time they came, — they were either looking for German soldiers, firearms, or wireless sets, etc. Every time they searched a house they took some of the possessions with them, until in the end there was not very much left. Things then became particularly difficult for us in the middle of March, when we were forced to work for the Russians and had to build entrenchments round Gleiwitz in icy cold weather and snowstorms. It was simply a cruel form of torturing German women. The fighting front was at Ratibor for eight weeks, and, in consequence, we were made to suffer. From the end of March until July we then worked at a locksmith's and made currycombs for the Red Army reinforcements. We used to start work at six o'clock in the morning and get home again at six in the evening. We had to work on Sundays, too, and were given neither payment nor food for what we did. Incidentally, we had no ration cards from January, 1945, onwards as the Russians looted all the warehouses, food offices and shops, and transported all the food-stuffs to Russia. For weeks on end goods trains, laden with food, were to be seen rolling eastwards. — There were no engines left in the factories. They were simply taken to pieces and loaded onto trains. The whole district was thoroughly looted. I kept intending to go into town.

but I could not summon up the courage. Every time I caught sight of a Russian soldier on the street my knees started to tremble. About the middle of May, however, I plucked up courage and ventured as far as the Ring. But what a sight met my eyes! I was moved to tears when I saw the place where I had worked and been so happy. It was a terrible sight. It had been pillaged and smashed up. The whole place was in a state of disorder. And there was something very sinister about the cellars, the front and the rear building. There was not a soul to be seen anywhere. It was as though the whole place were completely dead. I couldn't bear the sight for it was all so very different from how I remembered last seeing it. Yes, those good old days are ended, like a dream, and it grieves me to think how happy we once were.

A lot of civilians were shot by the Russians, most of them men. Kachel, who used to have the shop, Mueller, the hairdresser, Klonz. "Daddy" Langer, and a lot of others, about whose fate nothing is known. Mr. Schnapka died in a camp. Despite the fact that he was never a member of the Party and was over fifty, he was arrested by the OGPU. They took him away because he was a "capitalist". Anyone who had any property and even if it was only a small shop was considered to be a capitalist and arrested by the Russians. All the persons who had been in the Party were arrested, even if they had only been paying members or on the waiting-list for Party membership. And the OGPU even put members of the women's movement and the girls' and boys' movements into prison. When the Russians had about finished arresting people the Poles began tormenting the Germans. It was dreadful — we were not even allowed to talk German on the streets. We are thankful to have got here safely, even though we have nothing but the clothes on our backs. But at least, no one molests us here, we can sleep in peace at night, and we need not be afraid of walking about in the streets. The people here have not felt the effects of the war very much. They still have all their possessions, and the Tommies don't bother them.

Meanwhile life goes on as usual. Food is rationed, but we get enough. We didn't get any ration cards at all at home from January, 1945, onwards, and we were practically starving. We know from experience only too well what starvation is like and so we are now very thankful to be able to get everything we need here. Which just goes to show how modest one can get in one's wants!

Report No. 9

Gleiwitz, Upper Silesia²³

On January 23, 1945, my husband and I and the rest of the people living in the house were sheltering in the cellar when the Russians entered. They immediately drove all the men out into the yard, with the intention of shooting them, as there had allegedly been some firing out

²³ s. *Beitraege*, Vol III, p. 622 ff

of our house. Mr. Woschek, the solicitor, who speaks Polish, denied these allegations, and the men were then allowed to return to the cellar, but not before the Russians had fired several shots outside in the yard. The womenfolk in the cellar were convinced that their husbands were being shot and screamed out in terror, and were very relieved when all the men returned. This procedure was repeated three times. Some other Russian soldiers then raided the cellar and took some of the young people off into the apartments in the house. It was no good our pleading and begging with them. We even sacrificed our last pieces of jewelry, after having previously given the soldiers who ransacked the house our rings, watches, and gold jewelry, so that they would spare us.

Kuele, the director of the OEW, Breitenbach, the sculptor, and Alsikal were shot in Lieutenant Schnell's apartment. On January 29th, the Russians set fire to No. 9, Miethe Avenue, and then to all the neighbouring houses. Before they did this they had been coming in five or six times a day, ransacking wardrobes and cupboards, in fact, the entire apartments, that were a dreadful sight every time these hordes had been through them.

On February 4th, a Russian captain, an interpreter, and a sergeant came for my husband, allegedly in order to discuss the setting up of a new civilian administration with him. They made me go along with him and told us that we should be back home again in two hours' time. Unsuspectingly, we went along to the Assize Court with them. When we got there the captain told us that we were under arrest. We were then taken to the prison and put in solitary confinement. On February 14th, we were transferred to the Monte Lupe prison in Cracow. Next day they herded all of us — there were two thousand men and women — into cattle-trucks, with Rudlo, nine miles from Stalino, as our destination. We travelled in these cattle-trucks for twelve days. It was so icy cold that we often screamed with pain. Our clothes were covered with frost, and I developed frost-bite in my toes. Many of the men and women died en route, and their naked corpses were thrown into holes that were hastily dug for this purpose. Mr. Schareck, the head of the administrative department of the law court, was buried like this, by the railway line. As I was getting out of the cattle-truck I saw Mr. Piechotta (Pichulla), the director of the slaughter-house, lying there, dying. His hands were completely frost-bitten. It was a dreadful sight, that I shall never forget as long as I live. As we trudged along to the collecting camp I kept looking for my husband, but failed to see him anywhere. Mr. Koch, the vet, told me afterwards that my husband was taken along to the camp later on a lorry as he was ill. When I eventually found him he was completely exhausted. Councillor Boziwka was in the camp, too, and dying of blood-poisoning. Mr. John, of the board of education, died there of dysentery, and his wife and mother-in-law were shot in Gleiwitz. Mr. Mandel and Mr. Babisch, the school inspectors, died of exhaustion, and so did Mr. Gawert, the schoolmaster, Inspector Danotzki, Mr. Cziupka of the law court, and a host of others. At the advice of Dr. Koch and Dr. Neumann, both of whom died of exhaustion in the second

camp, as did Mr. Goerlich, the chemist, I burnt charcoal night and day in order to check the dysentery which had broken out among the men-folk. The epidemic abated somewhat, but many of the men later died of exhaustion. Two days later all the men who were able to walk were ordered to march to Stalino. In the second camp at Pdka Sofka, 44 miles from Stalino, I later talked to some of the sick men who had been on this dreadful march, and they told me that it had taken them fourteen hours to walk nine miles. Many of them died of exhaustion on the way, including President Schmidt-Wolten; and Mr. Fritze, the chemist, committed suicide. Mrs. Heinze, the homeopath, died at Starobielsk. At the second camp we met some German prisoners-of-war and some girls of the Women's Auxiliary Air Force from the west, who had been interned in Roumania. At the first camp we had been in I had tended the sick, but by the time we reached the second camp I was ill myself. Here, however, for the first time during this dreadful journey, we were allowed a straw mattress and a cover, which we shared. I was so utterly exhausted that I slept day and night. Three weeks later all the internees were again herded into cattle-trucks and taken to Starobielsk on the Aida, in the Eastern Ukraine. It was whilst we were in this camp that my husband died. Before he died he begged me not to grieve. His last words were that now he would find the eternal peace and rest that so many had already found. German prisoners-of-war buried him in a solitary grave in the quicksands. I was stricken with grief. From February onwards. I had been completely hoarse and had had a very painful inflammation of the larynx, but by July I was so far recovered as to be able to speak. This, however, was my misfortune, for on July 23rd, I was sent to the fourth labour camp, which was the worst of the lot. The food was terrible and we were forced to work the whole of the time. Here I contracted hunger-typhus; my legs were swollen and covered with ulcers, which refused to heal. There were no doctors and no medicines at the camp. There were 1,850 persons from Upper Silesia in the camp who had been sent there in March. Forty thousand men from Upper Silesia, who had been confined in the barracks at Gleiwitz, were also sent there. Councillor Huebner, Mr. Gebhard, the chemist, and Christian Klauska had also come to Stalino with our transport.

On October 6, 1945, I was then transferred to a hospital train together with the aged and the sick, as I was ill. The train was bound for Germany, with Frankfort on the Oder as its destination. It was overrun with lice and we had to lie on the bare floor. The only food we were given was three rations of bread. Each ration consisted of one pound and we received the last one on October 11th. Just before we reached Kiev the train was put onto a siding. Many of those with me died of exhaustion, and I contracted hunger-typhus a second time. When we got to Kroocowice near Cracow the train stopped there for five days. The coaches were getting emptier and emptier as more and more people were dying. It was whilst we were here that practically all the persons from Upper Silesia decided to flee. As I did not expect to live I begged the men to take me

with them, for I had little hope of ever reaching Frankfort alive. I summoned up my last ounce of strength and was determined to make a desperate effort to reach Myslowitz, 34 miles away. Some of the men had managed to make a rough skeleton key, and when it was dark they unlocked the door of the coach. We climbed over the railway-lines and struggled through the damp fields until we reached the road from Cracow to Katowice. Every time a motor-vehicle came in sight we lay down in the ditch by the side of the road, as we did not know whether we were being pursued or not. At six-thirty in the morning we eventually reached Myslowitz. Starving, frozen with cold, and completely exhausted, I crept into All Saints' Church, sank down onto a bench, and slept there for three hours. I had come back as a beggar to the town through which I had once strolled as a young and elegantly dressed woman. — We parted company in Myslowitz and took the tramcar to reach our respective towns. Imagine my dismay when I reached Gleiwitz and saw that there were no longer any German names on any of the buildings and apartments. Despite the fact that I was completely exhausted, I searched Reichspresident Square and eventually found our former janitor, living in an apartment on the fourth floor. He had likewise returned from Russia two weeks previously. His wife very kindly took care of me. I was so weak and exhausted that I was confined to bed for a while, but thanks to the gruel she gave me I managed to recover. I realized that it was unwise for me to stay in Gleiwitz, for I was obliged to hide from the militia and was afraid that they might send me to the Polish camp, to which so many people in Gleiwitz had been sent. On November 16th, I therefore left the town together with a friend, travelling on an open lorry. Via Katowice I proceeded to Breslau to some friends I had there, but when I got there I discovered that they had left the town. From there, by various round-about routes, I eventually reached Bautzen.

Report No. 10

The Parish of Haselgrund, near Gleiwitz, Upper Silesia²⁴

According to the last official ecclesiastical census in the year 1940 the parish of Haselgrund (Deutsch-Zernitz) included approximately 3,000 Catholics and 40 persons of other denominations (1929). The church, dedicated to St Michael, is mentioned in historical records as early as 1447. The present wooden church was built in about 1648. The parish was part of the Cistercian Abbey at Rauden until 1810.

... On Friday, January 26, 1945, towards noon, a large number of Russian tanks, coming from Gleiwitz, entered the village and stopped at the crossroads between the school and the church. The Ukrainians and Poles working in the village greeted them joyfully. After a little while the tanks moved off again in the direction of Schoenwald-Gleiwitz. Hardly had they gone when an endless column of jeeps and cars

²⁴ s. *Beitraege*, Vol III, p. 629 ff

entered the village, and Russian soldiers swarmed into the houses. The inhabitants were horrified and dismayed to think that they had not left the village in time. One of the first persons to be shot by the Russians was the tractor-driver on the big estate. They shot him in the presence of his family because he had once beaten some Ukrainians who had refused to work.

... The months that followed were dreadful. The Russians went about the village constantly threatening the inhabitants with their guns. Every Russian soldier swore to kill at least a hundred Germans because, as they alleged, the German soldiers had murdered their fathers, mothers, and children. A number of men in the village were shot, and many women and girls were raped.

... Some men of the neighbouring districts who had been arrested by the Russian police were the first persons to bring the villagers news of what had happened in the nearby parishes. In Bilchengrund several nuns had been raped, murdered, and their bodies thrown into the burning convent. In Kieferstaedtel the inmates of the home for the aged had been driven into the building whilst it was on fire, and had perished in the flames. The Russians had locked the parson in the cellar at the vicarage and had then set fire to the house, but fortunately some parishioners had rescued him in time. Russian soldiers had set fire to the church and castle at Rauden²⁵. In Buchenlust the vicarage had been razed to the ground. At Birkenau the old archpresbyter, Father Winkler²⁶, had been murdered and his house burnt down; Curate Dropalla, Chaplain Kutscha, who was ill, and young Father Klodwig of Gleiwitz, who was to take over the parish, had all been shot. In all the neighbouring districts priests had been shot by the Russians and the churches and vicarages razed to the ground.

In the middle of February, 1945, all the menfolk between sixteen and fifty years of age were interned in Gleiwitz. They were told that they would have to work behind the fighting front, but only for two weeks.

... More than three hundred men were then sent to work in the coal-mines in Russia. By 1948 about one hundred of them had died. Those who were ill and unable to work were sent home via the German collecting camps.

²⁵ The Cistercian Abbey at Rauden was founded in 1258 and the church, dedicated to the Assumption of the Virgin, was likewise built in the thirteenth century. Various alterations were carried out during the baroque era and also later. In 1810 the monastery was secularized and the church became the parish church. The destruction of this church, which was more than 700 years old, is an irreparable loss for the whole of Upper Silesia, for the monastery represented the spiritual and religious centre of the entire province.

²⁶ Cf. Reports under Section VI and *The Martyrdom of Silesian Priests 1945/1946*, pp 100, 101, 118

*Report No. 11***The Parish of Schoenwald, near Gleiwitz, Upper Silesia²⁷**

The parish of Schoenwald included 5,020 Catholics (1942) and 26 persons of other denominations (1929). The idea of building a church (Church of the Holy Virgin) was entertained as early as 1269 when the village was first settled. This church is mentioned in historical records of the year 1447. The present church was built in 1900. Schoenwald belonged to the Cistercian Abbey at Rauden until 1810.

The Fate of Those Who Remained in Schoenwald

About one thousand inhabitants defied danger and remained in Schoenwald, since they did not really believe that the Russians were as cruel and inhuman as they were reputed to be, but hoped to win over the latter by welcoming them and being hospitable. But their hopes, alas, were dashed to the ground.

On the afternoon of January 25, 1945, after the German troops had withdrawn unobserved, the first Russian troops entered the village from the east. This went off quite peacefully, no shots were fired, the Germans served food and drink to the Russians, and the latter were very amiable. Any misgivings, which some of the inhabitants of the village might have had, vanished. On the afternoon of January 26, 1945, some Russian tanks entered the village, followed by motorized columns. Within a couple of minutes the entire village was occupied by the Russians, who now went from house to house, looting and murdering. No one was left unmolested. Neither girls nor women were spared the ignominious outrage of being raped by the Russians, who, as the victors, considered this to be their right. Fourteen-year old girls and sixty-year old women were treated alike. For weeks on end they had to submit to the will of the victors. Those who refused to submit were either treated in a most inhuman manner, shot or murdered. Parents who attempted to protect their children were either taken off to the vast steppes and mining districts of Ural or Siberia, or else they were shot dead on the spot and now lie buried in one of the two huge graves in the village churchyard, which contain the bodies of the two hundred victims slaughtered by these barbarians. When the Russians eventually tired of looting, robbing, murdering, and ill-treating the women and girls, they set fire to a considerable part of the village and razed it to the ground. And all this was done despite the fact that not a single shot was fired in resistance on our part.

²⁷ s. *Beitraege*, Vol. I, p. 425 ff. — s. also: P. Bielke, *Schoenwald. Das Schicksal der 700 Jahre alten Sprachinsel* Goepfingen, 1950.

The following buildings were wilfully destroyed by the Russians:

170 dwelling-houses	1 doctor's and dentist's surgery
40 stables	1 chemist's shop
50 barns	1 joiner's workshop
30 sheds	1 bakery
7 foodstores	1 butcher's shop
5 restaurants	1 wire-netting factory
2 elementary schools	2 shoemaker's workshops
1 townhall	2 smithies
1 railway station	

Poles from the neighbouring villages later ransacked Schoenwald and removed whatever was left after the Russians had finished looting. The girls and women still left in the village were constantly at the mercy of the Russians. When the Russians handed over the administration to the Poles at the beginning of May, 1945, the inhabitants of the village who were still left were forced to work as servants and labourers on the farms that had once belonged to them, which were now occupied by Polish farmers from Volhynia. All they received for their services was poor food but no wages. At the end of October, 1945, the Poles issued their first eviction order. About eight hundred persons, including old men, women, girls, and children, were driven onto the square in front of the church like a herd of defenceless cattle, and from there, to the dismal farewell sound of the church bells which the Poles had rung out of sheer mockery, were taken to Gleiwitz, to the camp at the smelting-works, carrying the few possessions they had been allowed to take with them. After the Poles had starved them for two days they were herded into cattle-trucks, together with other Germans, seventy to ninety of them in one truck, and taken to Mecklenburg. The journey lasted two weeks, during which time they were given no food. Many of them never reached their destination, but died on the way as a result of the brutal treatment they received, of hunger, thirst, and the terrible hardships they had undergone. Those who died were not even buried, but their bodies were simply thrown out of the train. Those who managed to survive the journey found a refuge in Mecklenburg and Saxony. But they were so emaciated and exhausted that many of them fell a victim to typhus. About 150 men, women, and children, but mainly women and girls, contracted this dreadful disease and died of it. In June, 1946, a further transport of persons from the district that had once been truly German and the Catholic bulwark on the Slav border arrived in Germany, to be followed by the last and smallest transport in May, 1947. Most of them found a refuge in Oldenburg, Schleswig-Holstein, Hanover, and Westphalia. In this way this truly German and Catholic village, which once consisted of about six thousand inhabitants, has been scattered to the winds. Until such time as they can perhaps be re-settled, as for instance by returning to their native province, the inhabitants of this village have meanwhile found a temporary home in about five hundred different towns and villages in the various zones of Germany.

The Death Roll of Schoenwald:

- about 200 persons were brutally murdered by the Russian soldiers and lie buried in two huge graves in the village churchyard;
- 60 children and old people, who froze to death on the trek during the cold winter of 1945 or who died of exhaustion, lie buried in foreign soil;
- about 150 persons died of typhus and lie buried in Mecklenburg, in the Brandenburg Marches, and in Saxony;
- about 250 soldiers were killed in action in foreign countries;
- about 300 persons were abducted, reported as missing or prisoners-of-war. About 80 per cent of them were serving in the East, that is to say they were abducted by the Russians and the Poles, and have not yet returned home;
- about 250 children, whose parents were either killed in action, murdered, or died of disease, have no home. Only a comparatively small number of them have found shelter with kindhearted and generous people.

Report No. 12

Hindenburg, Upper Silesia ²⁸

The town of Hindenburg in 1945 included eight parishes and five curacies with about 128,000 Catholics (1942) and 10,000 persons of other denominations (1929). The Church of St Andrew is mentioned as early as 1354 (present church was built in 1868). The Church of St John the Baptist is mentioned as early as 1305 (present church was built in 1853/56). The Church of St Laurence in Klausburg is mentioned as early as 1326 (present church was built in 1892/94).

After launching three attacks the enemy succeeded in entering our part of the town. It was as though the world had come to an end, for we had hoped to the very last that we, that is to say the industrial area, would at least not be surrendered to the enemy without a struggle. Our terrible sufferings began the moment the Russians entered the town. In fact it was just as if the sluices which separated us from the East had been opened, for, at the same time as the Russians seized the town, vast crowds of Poles also swarmed in. We were only about a mile and a quarter away from the former frontier. As soon as they arrived, the invaders began raiding and looting the whole town. Just as several hundred years ago the people of the town had closed the town-gates and had sought to protect themselves from the enemy by withdrawing into the centre of the settlement, so we, too, now sought to protect ourselves. We locked and

²⁸ s *Beitraege*, Vol II, p 818.

barred the doors of our houses and barricaded them with thick boards and heavy iron bars, but these measures proved useless. The invaders smashed the windows and doors of shops and empty houses, and then seized anything they could lay hands on. They were completely lawless and like wild animals in their greed.

A few days after the Russians had occupied the town, all the men between the ages of seventeen and fifty-five had to report themselves. Needless to say, they never returned home. They were herded together, hundred and thousands of them, in camps and then abducted and taken east. After this the Russians then seized all the persons who had been members of the National Socialist Party and put them in prison. Women, too, were treated in exactly the same way and shared the same fate as the menfolk. Those who were not put in prison were forced to work on the railway-lines in icy weather. I myself was working at the pharmacy during this time, together with a girl-colleague, and it was by no means an easy job. We kept tidying the place up, and every morning when we got there again we would find it had been ransacked once more, the boards in front of the windows smashed, and the medical supplies scattered on the floor. We longed to help the people in their great need and distress, but the Russians made it impossible for us to do so. During the daytime, when we were working in the pharmacy, we lived in constant fear and dread of drunken Russians coming in and wanting alcohol, which in fact quite often happened.

The dire need of the population grew worse from day to day. Since all the shops had been ransacked there was no food to be had. The refrigerators at the slaughter-house had been smashed to pieces, and so the meat supplies turned bad. To make matters even worse, the Russians seized the meagre flour supplies which the bakers still possessed. They were determined to make the Germans die of starvation. The only persons who occasionally received a piece of bread were those who worked for the Russians. In this connection I clearly recall a tragic incident that occurred. Several of us were queueing up in front of a baker's shop in the hopes of getting some bread. Suddenly a drunken Ukrainian appeared on the scene and began swearing at us and threatening us with his rifle. We hurriedly dispersed as he fired a few shots in the air. After a while he calmed down, and hunger and the faint hope of perhaps being able to obtain a little bread after all prompted us to queue up again. But suddenly the Ukrainian seized hold of his rifle again and shot an old woman who was standing just in front of me. In those days many people were killed in this manner by the Russians.

In March, when I was at my wits' ends as to how to obtain food, I decided to work in the mine as this was the only chance of getting a plate of soup every day. And in any case we were fairly safe there from being molested. So I turned into a forge apprentice and began plying hammer and crowbar. After a while I was transferred to the boiler-room. But I was not to enjoy peace and quiet for long.

Abductions

On April 17th, three Russians and two Germans came and searched the house for three hours. They moved all the cupboards from the walls, emptied every single drawer, and even searched the stoves. They hunted among the coals in the cellar with their hands and knocked the piles of firewood over, in the hopes of discovering something or other which should have been handed over to the Russians, as for instance a wireless set, a camera, a typewriter, or firearms. But despite all their efforts they failed to find anything. Seeing their search had proved futile they then arrested my father, despite the fact that he had never been a member either of the National Socialist Party or of any of its affiliated organisations. He was first of all locked up in the cellar of the townhall, then he was taken to the prison at Beuthen, and from there to two or three camps. From there all trace of him is missing. I was now all alone with my mother until April 24th, when I, too, was arrested and abducted and taken to Auschwitz. Early in the morning members of the Communist Committee came and arrested me and took me along to the school, together with a lot of other women, old men, and children. We were locked up there all day, and in the evening the Russians came to take us away on lorries. As we drove out of the schoolyard we secretly hoped that they would be taking us towards the west. Imagine our despair, when we saw that the lorries were proceeding in an easterly direction. I knew the route as far as Katowice. When we reached the town the lorries drove this way and that so that we should lose our bearings. When we finally reached our destination and the barbed-wire fence loomed up in front of us we suddenly realized that we were in Auschwitz. I still shudder to think of the first night I spent there. It was raining a little when we arrived, and in the faint and dismal moonlight every lamp-post looked like a gallows and every pool of water like a pit which was waiting to receive us. We were all of us fully convinced that we should never get out of this inferno alive. On the day after our arrival our work began. Escorted by a large number of guards, we were taken along to the IG dye-works and had to help dismantle the place. The Russians made us do every kind of work, including the taking apart of engines, packing, etc. They even made us work on scaffolding, which was thirty to forty feet high, without a safety-rope. And the guards were highly amused when they saw us dragging huge crates along or struggling with large engine-parts. They, of course, did not do a stroke of work, but stood by, watching us. Each day brought new victims. Numerous young people were killed practically every day by heavy pipes falling on them or else they slipped off the scaffolding. And those of us who were still alive envied the dead. Nowadays people may reproach us for having longed and wanted to die in those days. It was not that we had forgotten God. On the contrary, we still believed in Him and prayed to Him to help us. But at the beginning most of us felt that we should never have the moral strength to endure what was happening to us. It was not only the heavy work and the uncertainty

of not knowing what was going to happen to us that made us despair, but above all the moral shame of knowing that the Russians were our masters, and could do with us what they liked. It did not matter so much that they tortured us with work, and that they even made us clean the barracks at night when we got back after twelve hours' work in the factory. What distressed us most and made us long for death was the fact that, very often in the middle of the night, young girls were fetched out of the barracks and taken along to amuse the officers. Week after week we were told that we should be allowed to go back home very soon, but we no longer believed such statements. Things would not have seemed quite so bad had we at least been in Upper Silesia and living among Germans. But as it was, we even had to put up with insults and torture on the part of the Polish population, in particular children and also gypsies. Now and again letters were smuggled into the camp, and in this way we learned that conditions at home were going from bad to worse. We longed to return home, but there was no way of getting there. We considered the idea of trying to escape from the camp, but soon realized that this was absolutely impossible. Some of the men who had tried to escape had promptly been seized again and had been severely punished. They had been beaten, starved, made to do heavy work, and had been locked up in the coal-cellars at night. As far as we could see, we womenfolk would probably be treated even worse if the Russians caught us trying to escape. So we decided that it would be wiser to continue to endure the hardship inflicted upon us every day. Sooner than I had hoped, however, I was released from the camp. At the end of June I fell ill and was released on July 2nd, because the woman-doctor insisted that I should be allowed to return home, despite the fact that the supervisor of the camp had previously torn up my first two discharge-certificates. Timid and scared, I went along to the station with another young woman. It was a most peculiar feeling to be suddenly walking through the streets without a military guard. I had tied a cloth over my mouth so that I would not need to answer if anyone spoke to me, for one word in German would have resulted in our being taken along to the dreadful Polish camp where the Germans formerly living in the Carpathians were interned. We were lucky, and managed to get home safely.

The Expulsion of the Germans

But I was not allowed to enjoy my freedom for very long. On July 24th, there was a considerable commotion in the district we lived in. Polish militia barricaded the entire street and nobody was allowed to leave the house. We were terrified lest the Poles were coming to fetch all the younger women and take them away to some camp or other. We climbed up into the attic and hid among the rafters under the roof. Suddenly my mother appeared and told us that all the people from the neighbouring houses were being driven out of their apartments. We rushed downstairs, put on three or four dresses, one on top of the other, and barely had time to stuff any important documents we had into our pockets before the Poles arrived. Cold-bloodedly and sarcastically, they informed

us that we must leave the house at once. In fact some of them were already ransacking the rooms. They told us we could each of us take a blanket, so we hurriedly stuffed two pillows inside the blanket. But when the Polish officer, who, incidentally, was rushing up and down in the room like a maniac, striking his whip against his riding-boots, saw the pillows, he said, "Leave those here. We Poles want something as well!" There was nothing for it but to leave the pillows behind. We hastily grabbed our handbags and, in our confusion, as we afterwards unfortunately ascertained, an empty suitcase. They made us climb onto a lorry, and after a little while we drove off, and once more landed behind barbed-wire. The treatment we received in the camp was more than inhuman. Eighty-four of us were herded together in a small wooden shed — men and women, great-grandmothers and babies. For four weeks we slept on the stone floor. When we asked for straw mattresses the guards set about beating my mother. During the day the heat in the shed was terrific, and at night there were so many bugs and lice that we found it practically impossible to get any sleep whatsoever. To begin with, we received no food at all and so we were obliged to starve until our priests and clergymen appealed to the rest of the German population to supply us with food. I still stand amazed at the sacrifices and hardships that so many of our fellow-countrymen took upon themselves in order to help us. It used to take them over an hour on foot to reach the camp and they used to hand us bowls and cans containing food over the barbed-wire. Even today I still gratefully think of the priests and nuns who used to come out to the camp twice a week and who helped us not only in the physical but also in the spiritual sense. It was thanks to their intercession that a mass was read on Sundays in the mine-house at the pit. On the first Sunday, however, the guards marched us off to work instead of taking us along to the mine-house. It was a touching sight to see everyone kneeling in silent prayer during the service, tears streaming down their faces. In the meantime about three hundred men, including a number of priests, had also been brought to the camp and interned there. We were, however, not allowed to talk to them, and if anyone ventured to do so, they were punished by having to spend the night in an ash-pit, which was about as large as a kitchen-table and had no ventilation whatsoever. After we had been at the camp for four weeks we were marched before a camp committee and were informed that we had been expelled from the country. We packed up the few belongings we had, as quickly as we could, and set off for home. Home! We no longer had a home! The house we had lived in had been ransacked from top to bottom and we were not even allowed to enter. We stood on the street for a whole hour, not knowing what to do or where to go. People were afraid to give us shelter, for it was a crime to shelter a German and inevitably resulted in the same kind of punishment and in the same fate that we had already experienced. Our old nursemaid very kindly took me in, but my mother was not so fortunate and was obliged to move from one temporary shelter to another. Life was becoming more and more unbearable. People no longer helped us, as they had nothing more to give.

We were practically starving. It was of course possible to buy anything one wanted, but the prices were exorbitant, and in any case we had no Polish money. My mother wanted to remain in her native town as long as she could because she constantly hoped that some day my father would return. But things became too dangerous for us to remain, for I was being watched by the Polish militia and was informed by a Pole that I should clear off as quickly as I could. It really seems an irony of fate but it is nevertheless true, when I say that we actually had to send in a petition in order to obtain the necessary papers to prove that we had been expelled from our own country.

On October 7, 1945, we finally left our native town. The journey we were obliged to undertake was terribly exhausting. We managed to get as far as Breslau by train, where we were then robbed of our last remaining possessions. After this experience we decided that it would be wiser to avoid railway-stations; seeing that the entire train-service was in a state of utter confusion and we as Germans were constantly in danger of being thrown out of the trains, we had no other choice but to tramp on foot. We tramped for miles and miles and were thankful if someone gave us a bundle of straw for us to rest on during the night. Sometimes we were lucky enough to be given a lift by a Russian lorry. But in such cases the Russians very often drove us into a wood, and after having robbed the people with us chased us off, threatening us with their loaded rifles. Eventually we managed to reach Forst at the frontier. After our papers had been carefully examined and any small oddments that we still had in our possession had been taken from us, we crossed the bridge over the Neisse as quickly as we possibly could. We were in Germany! We were free! It was this thought alone that gave us strength to endure the hardships of the rest of our journey. Our food supply had meanwhile come to an end and we had no ration cards, but somehow we managed to survive. It was not until we had crossed the frontier between the Russian and the British zone under cover of darkness that we really felt free and easy in our minds. Once over the frontier, we found a temporary refuge in a refugees' camp, but the strain of the long journey, which had taken us three weeks, and of all the suffering she had gone through during the past months proved too much for my mother, and she suffered such a serious collapse that she was confined to bed for many weeks.

Report No. 13

Curacy of St. Matthew, Hindenburg-Mathesdorf, Upper Silesia²⁹

(Locum, part of parish of St Andrew, 4,000 Catholics)

... During the night of January 24th, 1945, the Russians entered the western district of the town of Hindenburg.

... On February 12th, all the men between the ages of seventeen and fifty were taken eastwards at the command of the Russians, and interned.

²⁹ s *Beträge*, Vol. III, p 636 ff

At the same time many of the young girls and women were taken off to the surrounding districts of the town and forced to work in factories or to dig entrenchments.

... On March 18th, 1945, as I came out of church, I caught sight of a notice affixed to a fence on which the word "Polary!" had been written. We were looked upon as Poles, since Poland attached great importance to the people of Upper Silesia remaining in their native towns, provided they were not civil servants, landowners, or members of the academic professions. So far only a relatively small number of Upper Silesians had fled.

The problem was whether to remain or to leave. We were forced to state on oath that we were not only Polish subjects but members of the Polish race! For various reasons I felt that I could not swear such an oath. On September 20th, 1945, I therefore left my home — my beloved and unhappy German country — of my own free will, at dead of night and without even being able to say farewell to my father and my sister.

Report No. 14

Parish of St. Francis, Hindenburg, Upper Silesia³⁰

(Church built in 1884/85, about 19,000 Catholics)

On Sunday morning, January 26th, the Russians entered our house for the first time. The soldiers, led by an officer, only searched the house very superficially. After several days' fighting, most of which took place near to our church, St. Francis' Parish Church in Hindenburg, in that part of the town called Zaborze, the Russians, advancing from Gleiwitz, managed to capture Hindenburg and pushed on towards Katowice. Dreadful atrocities happened in the town itself. Houses were looted, people were attacked by night, and women and girls were raped. People were constantly being abducted and taken off to do forced labour somewhere. Girls and women were made to dig entrenchments on the outskirts of the town. The situation grew more dreadful from day to day. The worst thing of all, however, was the famine. For weeks on end we had no ration cards. Very soon the Russians had looted and emptied all the shops. During the first week in Lent all the men between the ages of seventeen and fifty had to report to the Russians. They were allegedly to help clear up debris in the rear fighting zone. In reality, however, they were put into the prison that was being used as an internment transit camp, from there they were sent to the big camp at Laband, and then later taken to Russia. With the exception of some of the miners who were spared internment, practically all of the thirty thousand men in Hindenburg were abducted in this way. The majority of these men — at times there were fifty thousand men herded together in the camp at Laband, sometimes in the open, and with no sanitary installations at all,

³⁰ s *Beitraege*, Vol I, p 414 ff

—are still in Russia (December, 1946). It has been learnt from some of the men who have been allowed to return home that many of the internees have meanwhile died. The only men who have been allowed to return home are those who are completely incapacitated, and most of them have died soon after their return.

Owing to the fact that there were very few men left in Hindenburg seeing that the majority had been interned, the number of cases of rape increased from day to day. The German Communist Party, which now called itself "Committee Free Germany", offered to co-operate with the Russians; its work consisted in acting as police-spies for the Russians, and its members searched the houses more thoroughly than the Russians themselves did, and also used their influence in order to get rich and to take personal revenge on others.

On March 19th, the Russians handed over the administration of the town to the Poles. To begin with, things remained as they were. Gradually, however, the Poles re-opened the various municipal administrative departments. Most of the people employed there were Poles from the former Polish district. Hardly any of the employees were natives of Hindenburg. The situation became even more critical when the Polish militia set up their guardhouses in various parts of the town. A new wave of arresting and looting began, and, to be quite honest, the Poles were even worse than the Russians in this respect. Incidentally, the Polish militia was actually a Communist Polish organisation which also included members of the Russian OGPU. Meanwhile the persons belonging to the Polish minority were given identity papers. Despite all efforts to rally more people, there were only three hundred Poles among the civilian population of the town. This figure is official, and this information was passed on to me by the leader of the Polish minority in Hindenburg — the name of the town, incidentally, had meanwhile been changed to Zaborze. He lived in my parish, and as I was the Catholic priest there and had helped him very considerably during the time of the Third Reich, when he was regarded as a political suspect, I knew him very well. On the whole, the inhabitants of Hindenburg did not take the Polish administration very seriously, and more or less believed that it was only a temporary arrangement. Unfortunately, however, they were mistaken in this respect. In the course of the next few weeks a few more families, for the most part businessmen and landowners, applied for registration as Poles. The Poles, however, were of the opinion that Polish influence was making itself felt too slowly throughout the town, and, moreover, owing to the fact that the Polish schools which had been opened in the meantime were still practically empty, they resorted to new and ever-increasing methods of terrorization in order to compel the inhabitants to apply for registration as Polish subjects. The miners, who, as far as their numbers are concerned, represent the largest percentage of the total population and at the same time that part of the population that has lived in this district longest, were the very last group to apply for registration as Polish subjects. Indeed, it was not until they were threatened with wage-

cuts, dismissal, and deprivation of the ration cards which had meanwhile been issued to workers, that they began to yield to Polish measures. As a priest who lived among the people and during the weeks and months of hardship in 1946 visited many districts and mixed with every class of the population, I can truly say that, with but a few exceptions, there was no one who was not highly indignant and outraged at having to apply for registration as a Polish subject. Indeed, most of the men only complied with this compulsory measure because they could not bear the sight of their children slowly starving to death. When people heard that I and my fellow-worker had not applied for registration they used to say, "If I were free like you and had no wife and children I would do the same. It is a great pity that we shall now lose you as a priest, but the two of you have at least really shown everyone what patriotism and truth demands of us." We were not the only ones who refused to apply for registration as Polish subjects, although all of us who had refused were eventually compelled to leave our native country.

And now to mention a few of the Polish terrorization measures. Lorries would sometimes drive up in front of the houses and militiamen would force their way into the apartments, drive out the inhabitants and make them get onto the lorries. They would then be taken along to a camp, surrounded on all sides by barbed-wire. In this way a house or a whole block of houses was cleared out, to be later occupied or looted by the families that were swarming in from Poland. The only persons who were spared such measures and internment were those who could prove that they had been registered as Polish subjects. These terrorization measures were resorted to, in order to speed up the applications for registration. The mother of Father Kannia, who was a native of Zaborze, was also interned in one of these camps, despite the fact that she was eighty-two years of age. As I knew various members of the Polish minority I succeeded in getting permission to visit her in the camp. What I saw there horrified me beyond all measure. There were no chairs, tables, beds, or washbasins in the barracks, which were filthy. The only food the internees received was a very thin, watery soup at dinnertime. Those who had no relatives who handed them food over the fence were obliged to starve. There were a number of women among the internees who had been in the camp for weeks and had given birth to babies there. The only internees who were released were those who applied for registration as Polish subjects whilst they were in the camp, but hardly any of them were able to go back to their former homes again, as their apartments had in the meantime either been completely ransacked or were now occupied by families from Poland. For weeks on end the inhabitants were terrorized by the Poles and were ejected from their homes and interned.

Those of the inhabitants who, in their distress, begged the Polish militia to help them merely endangered their lives and their property. Every time persons were interrogated and their houses searched the whole place was ransacked and looted, and whatever was left behind by one lot of soldiers was taken by the next. Interrogations held in the militia

guardhouses were usually the worst, for there the victims were, as a rule, beaten.

Every day news reached the town that some of the persons who had been arrested by the Polish national police and taken to the newly erected Polish concentration camps had died. At the camps in Myslowitz and elsewhere thousands of internees died of starvation and disease and as a result of the dreadful cruelty to which they were subjected there.

Report No. 15

Hindenburg, Upper Silesia³¹

Report written by an inhabitant of Hindenburg, Upper Silesia, who was abducted in the spring of 1945 and taken to Kasakstan:

We are not moving on until December 10th, so I have time to write to you and tell you all about my abduction.

After having been told that all we had to do was to help unload a truck at the station in Hindenburg, the Communists then took us into the town, interrogated us at the former recruiting office (the apartment used to belong to Mr. Harritz, the eye-specialist), and locked us up in the cellar. There they kept us for two days with practically no food and then took us to the prison one night. They had deprived us of all our possessions, including our braces, whilst we were still at the recruiting office, but returned some of the things to us at the prison. The man from the OGPU then ordered all those who had not had all their possessions returned to them to step out into the front row. As practically all my things were still missing I stepped out to the front, the others following me. The OGPU man asked me what I wanted and before I could answer he brandished an iron bar and dealt me several blows on my head and back until I finally fainted. I lay there on the floor of the corridor the whole night. Early next morning someone dragged me along to a cell in which there were a number of other fellow-sufferers, and locked me in. Day after day we were interrogated and beaten with an iron bar. The younger men and those who were tradesmen were treated worst of all and were interrogated and beaten every night. Then suddenly they started registering the tradesmen on a separate list. Thinking they might be released sooner, many of the prisoners affirmed that they were tradesmen or businessmen. At the interrogations, however, they discovered that the OGPU men were only after their gold and valuables, for those who were tradesmen or businessmen were beaten until they told their captors where they had hidden their valuables. You could hear them groaning and moaning all night. The day before we were moved from the prison they took our underclothing away, allegedly in order to have it washed. It was a good job I had a double lot of underclothes on, seeing it was winter, otherwise I should have had to make the dreadful journey to the

³¹ s *Beitraege*, Vol III, p. 639 ff

camp practically naked. On March 29th, 1945, we were suddenly ordered to line up in the prison-yard. We stood there for at least three hours, and then they made us march to Peiskretscham in the rain and snow. There they divided us up into four groups of two thousand men each and took us off in a train for some unknown destination. The food they gave us was very poor. Some days we got nothing at all, other days they would give us half a pint of hot water, and sometimes we received half a pint of soup and about a quarter pound of bread. During the whole of the journey we were not allowed to leave the trucks, which were locked and strongly guarded. When we finally reached our destination on April 8th, we could hardly walk. There had been eighty of us in one truck and so it had been quite impossible for us to move about. We were then taken along to a big factory by means of lorries and there we were given a bath and examined for lice! Some of the men were sent to a brick-works. The group that I was with, including myself, was taken to a camp in the steppes. Kasakstan is about 3,000 feet above sea level. The climate there is very dry. In the winter the thermometer drops to more than 20 degrees below zero, whilst in the summer the average temperature is about 122 degrees. It is a bare and desolate wind-swept country with no trees or shrubs. We sometimes saw sparrows, starlings, and wolves, and very occasionally white hares. We had to make roads, build houses, or else work in the brick-works or kolchoses, the collective farms, set up in the valleys and irrigated by artificial means. The Russian doctors divided us up into health and working groups. To begin with, I was in group 3 and had to work in the kolchoses for eight hours every day. After a time, as a result of the poor food we received, I was no longer able to do this heavy kind of work and was transferred to group 4 (invalids). After this I was in the hospital fairly often, and the food there was slightly better as it contained more fats. The food in the camp was very poor and meagre. Normal rations were as follows: in the morning, half a pound of bread and three-quarters of a pint of soup, made of groats, and very thin, of course; at noon, three-quarters of a pint of thin millet soup and about half a pound of millet porridge; at night, soup again and half a pound of bread. From these rations a certain quantity was always deducted for the invalids and for those who did the heaviest kind of work and the required amount per day. We were always hungry and cold, and covered with vermin. The atmosphere of uncertainty as to how long our exile would last and the many deaths that occurred had a very depressing effect on all of us. When we first arrived at the camp the shed we were put into was much too small. One of the Russian officers said to us, "After you've been here a month you'll have a lot more room as many of you are likely to die." Such were our prospects. Nineteen men died on the way to Kasakstan (about 300 miles to the north of Lake Aral), and by the time I left the camp on September 20, 1947, seven hundred of the two thousand men interned there had already died. I used to pray to God to let me at least die in my native country. The dead used to be buried completely naked, save for an identity disc tied to their big toe. They were simply rolled into a hole, — at first a whole lot of them

together, but later on they were given separate graves. The cemeteries were situated on slightly elevated ground, but there was no fence or wall round them. A Russian peasant with a small cart, drawn by a camel, used to collect the dead and bury them. — We used to have to work almost every Sunday, but we held a short religious service in our shed every day which was usually conducted by the teachers and professional men amongst us. In our shed Mr. K., the well-known Gleiwitz lawyer, used to hold the service. I got very friendly with him and Mr. K., the chemist, and we used to share all our joys and sorrows, in particular all the turnips, sugar-beet, melons, cucumbers, and tomatoes we managed to procure. The field-crops, which are much sweeter there, we usually ate raw; in fact, some of the men used to eat raw potatoes. I could write you volumes about our camp-life. Unfortunately most of my friends are still there and will not be returning home until next year, that is, if It is a pity that you and I can't meet and have a talk. God has truly granted me a new lease of life. I have received a telegram from my brother-in-law, telling me that there is some mail from my wife waiting for me in Karlsruhe... By the way, there is a Catholic church here in Uelsnitz, too, and no one prevents us from attending divine service. So far I do not know where I shall make my new home.

Report No. 16

Kreuzburg, Upper Silesia ³²

According to the census in 1942 the county-town of Kreuzburg had about 7,300 Catholics and 12,700 persons of other denominations (1929). The church, dedicated to the Apostles Peter and Paul, was presented to the Order of the Crusaders of St Matthew in Breslau in 1298. From 1550 onwards it was Protestant (from 1700 to 1707 it was again Catholic). In 1707 the so-called curacy of St Joseph was founded as part of the Church of the Holy Burial, and on August 8th, 1891, the parish was founded. The present church was built during the years 1911 to 1913.

Although there was no fighting in my native town half of it was destroyed by fire. After the town had been captured all those inhabitants who had remained behind were forced to leave for a considerable time and were not even allowed to take any of their possessions with them. By the time they returned a lot of the apartments had already been seized and occupied by Poles. In order to exist we were, of course, all of us obliged to work. Conditions in the town and also in the villages were, in general, very bad. People were attacked at night, beaten or killed, and robbed of their clothes. This was the state of affairs in June and July, 1945.

I was on my way home from work one day about the middle of July, 1945, when two youths stopped me. They spoke to me in Polish, but as I could not speak the language, I did not answer, and so they took me

³² s *Beitraege*, Vol. III, p. 613 ff

along to the Polish militia. Here I was locked in a cellar, and learnt from the other prisoners in the room that I was now in the hands of the Polish secret police. Every time the cell was inspected I was beaten and kicked, and, finally, after a week I was taken along to the prison, together with twenty other fellow-victims, including two women. There I was locked up in a cell together with three other men. Heavily guarded, we were marched off to work outside every day. Sometimes, and it all depended on what the guard was like, I managed to exchange a few words with my relatives. Conditions in the prison were typically Polish. The place was simply filthy and overrun with vermin. The only food we were given was three-quarters of a pound of bread and a pint of potato soup every day. Most of the prisoners suffered from dropsy, and during the winter we shivered with cold in the cells as they were not heated. On Christmas Eve they gave us a special ration, consisting of half a kipper. On March 7th, I was ordered to line up in the prison-yard together with twenty other men. We handed over our prison things and, together with some women, were transferred to the discharge camp at Jaworzno near Cracow. Here our sufferings began in real earnest. When I arrived at the camp there were six thousand soldiers, women, children, and old men interned there. We were told that we were going to be released next day. We had to line up and a doctor examined us, and after that we were divided up into groups for light work! That same noon we were assigned to work in the mines in groups of thirty.

At first we simply refused to believe in our fate, but we very soon realized that it was all too true. Accompanied by ten guards, we were driven to the mines on lorries. Despite the fact that my eyesight was poor and I wore glasses, and despite the fact that I was fifty-two and had been ill for a long time, I was forced to work 900 feet underground for twelve to fourteen hours a day. If we worked too slowly we were kicked and beaten. All the food we got was a pound of bread and one and a half pints of soup. When we got back to the camp at night we were completely exhausted, and then the bugs would start plaguing us. I worked in the mines for six months and then I fell ill. My hands and feet, in fact my whole body began to swell to such an extent that I was unable to put on my clothes. It was dropsy. My body began to swell more and more and eventually I was taken to the hospital. Conditions there were indescribable. For weeks I lay on a rough straw mattress with a blanket as my sole covering. The place was alive with bugs and lice. The sanitary installations were quite inadequate. There was one washbasin for twenty patients. German ambulance-men, who happened to be among the internees, helped us whenever they could. To begin with, there were no medicines available, but later some were supplied by the International Red Cross in Geneva. A very considerable number of the patients died of starvation. The camp doctors were forced to make as many workers as possible available for underground work in the mines, since manpower was continually decreasing owing to the strenuous work, the poor food, and numerous accidents. For this reason

even those internees who were not fit to work in the mines were forced to go down and very soon fell ill. The work underground was carried on at the cost of the prisoners' lives. There were no safety-measures whatsoever, and the number of accidents increased from day to day. The only motto which held good was coal, coal, as much as possible in order to keep up with the quota. The deaths which occurred during the first two years were mainly due to ill-treatment on the part of the commanders of the camp and the militia.

In August, 1945, my brother-in-law was killed by a drunken militiaman. Soon afterwards my sister died of typhus at the same camp in Skoda near Schwientochlowitz. This camp was one of the worst as far as killing off the Germans was concerned. This fact soon became common knowledge, so the Polish administrative authorities closed down the camp and transferred the prisoners to other camps. It was about this time that my mother, too, died. They found her in bed, starved and frozen to death.

After I had been in the camp hospital for a month I was discharged, and was now fortunate enough to be allowed to work in my profession as a dentist in the camp dental ward. Despite the fact that we only had very primitive means at our disposal, my colleague and I now gave all the prisoners dental treatment. In fact, we later turned into a kind of travelling dental clinic, that is to say we travelled about to five other camps which belonged to the same mining concern. In this way we managed to help many of our fellow-internees, some of whom, I am sure, are still grateful to us. We stayed in each camp for two months, and I was thus able to gain an insight into conditions at the various camps. The best camp from the spiritual aspect and as regards the treatment in general was the one at the President Worzow mine. At this camp confession and attendance at holy mass were permitted every Sunday, a privilege unknown at the other mining camps. We were at this camp at the beginning of November, 1947, when I suddenly received orders, together with fifteen other men, to return to Jaworzno for the purpose of being released from internment. It was with rather mixed feelings that we set out on our journey, and our suspicions were once again justified, for when we reached Jaworzno we were immediately assigned to working groups and no mention whatsoever was made of our release. According to what suited the Polish administrative authorities best, they alternately called us either prisoners-of-war, civilian internees or political suspects. Anything, so long as the prisoners were the victims!

I suffered a lot of hardship whilst at this camp in J. Two men had to share a bed, and there were four hundred men in each of the sheds. Fleas, lice, boils, shingles, night-blindness, and my old stomach trouble caused me to suffer agonies. I managed to drag myself about until November, 1948, but then I collapsed completely. I was taken to hospital and to begin with was given nothing but vitamin injections. I later managed to regain strength a little on the so-called diet. It was the same diet every day and consisted of barley-groats.

In March, 1949, I was once more transferred to the dental ward and worked there until July 12th, 1949.

July 12th, 1949, is a date I shall never forget. Our hopes had been dashed to the ground so often, but this time it really was true and we were going to be set free and return to Germany. On July 12th, we were assigned to groups according to alphabetical order, and our tattered civilian clothes that they had taken from us upon our arrival at the camp were handed over to us once more. Naturally we were all so happy and excited at the prospect of one thousand persons being released, that we found it impossible to go to sleep. And yet at heart we were inclined to be sceptical for we had been disappointed so often. Those of us who were at the hospital were taken to the railway-station by lorry, but the rest of the men who were being released had to go there on foot and were escorted by armed guards. In fact, they were driven to the station like a herd of cattle and pushed and beaten by the guards with the butt-end of their rifles. The good mood that everyone had been in quickly vanished, and most of the men were convinced that their last hour had come. Forty-five men were crowded into each of the trucks of the goods train which was to take us homewards. Each man was given a piece of bread and marmelade as his ration for three days, and then the trucks were locked and barred from the outside. The train set off, but none of us knew where we were bound for or what was going to happen to us.

It took us two days and a night to reach Bromberg, where the release camp for Germans was supposed to be. The train finally stopped some distance away from Bromberg, and those who were unable to walk were then taken to the camp, which was five and a half miles away, by lorry. The rest of us had to walk the distance despite the fact that the heat was terrific. It was on the way to the camp that my best pal, who came from my native town, died of heat-stroke. It is tragic to think that, after having survived so much suffering and hardship, he should die on the way home.

We were kept at the camp for a fortnight. The women, who had been in the camp some time, gave us some hints as to what to say when we were questioned by the camp authorities for the purpose of a final registration. The internees were asked what zone they wished to proceed to. Those who said they wanted to go to the Russian zone were put on the registration list to be released soonest, whereas those who said they wanted to go to the American zone were told they could stay at the camp until the Americans came for them with planes, and were simply not put on the registration list for release at all. This happened so many times that finally everyone said they wanted to go to the Russian zone. Shortly before we were to be conveyed to Germany we were told that all the possessions that had been taken from us when we had been arrested would be returned to us, but this statement again proved untrue and most of us arrived in Germany with nothing at all save the tattered clothing we were wearing.

One evening we were told to line up and received our marching orders. This time only a few guards accompanied us to the station

where the Red Cross was waiting to take over. You can imagine how happy we all were! There was a comfortable Red Cross train waiting for us at the station, and, for the first time during the past four years, we were given bread and butter, which we ate almost reverently. Then the train rolled out of the station and carried us towards Germany. Next day at noon we reached Frankfort on the Oder. I shall never forget how we all sang the hymn, "Holy Lord, we praise Thee", with the tears streaming down our faces, as the train crossed the bridge over the Oder. It was an indescribable feeling of relief to know that we were free once more, that there were no guards standing over us, and that we were human beings once again.

Report No. 17

The Parish of Rosenberg, Upper Silesia³³

The parish of Rosenberg included about 11,000 Catholics (1942) and 1,050 persons of other denominations (1929). A church dedicated to St Michael, the Archangel, is mentioned in historical records as early as 1226. In 1374 this church was handed over to the monastery of the Augustinian canons in Breslau for the purpose of founding a provostship, which was then secularized in 1810. The present church was built in 1913 in the baroque style, to replace the Church of the Holy Burial (Corpus Christi). The pilgrims' church, dedicated to St. Anne, was probably built as early as 1444, whilst the present wooden church was built in 1688. The votive church, dedicated to St Rochus, was likewise built of wood in 1708 after the great plague.

... Late in the afternoon of Saturday, January 20th, 1945, the Russians entered the town after the few German troops stationed there had left it at about three o'clock. No fighting took place in or near the town. As night fell an inferno broke out which lasted for days and weeks, in fact, for months. Day and night the Russians, who allegedly had liberated us from the terrorization of Hitlerism, looted and ransacked the houses, raped the women and girls, and set fire to buildings. Perhaps it was their feeling of triumph and victory at having crossed the German frontier that prompted them to be so ruthless and destructive in the way they dealt with the town and its inhabitants. In the course of about three weeks two-thirds of all the houses in Rosenberg were destroyed by fire. On Tuesday, January 23rd, the Russians set fire to the vicarage, which burnt down completely. We managed to extinguish the fire twice, but the third time we were powerless to fight it. All the parochial registers were destroyed when the vicarage burnt down. The following descriptions serve to show what happened to the various churches in the parish.

- 1) The wooden church of St. Rochus remained unharmed, both inside and outside.
- 2) The exterior of St. Anne's Church was undamaged, but inside the church the altars and statues were smashed and the organ was da-

³³ s *Beitraege*, Vol II, p 792 ff

maged so badly that it could no longer be used. The contents of the cupboards in the vestry were scattered all over the floor. The only part of the interior which was not damaged at all was the high altar.

- 3) The old parish-church of St. Michael's was damaged most. The high altar was completely destroyed, the tabernacle had been broken open by force, the consecrated wafers were scattered all over the floor, all that was left of the ciborium was the stem, which was completely bent, and the statues had been knocked off their pedestals and smashed. The side-altars had been demolished completely. We later gathered the fragments of the manger-figures together and put them in a little box.
- 4) The interior of the new parish-church was not damaged and the manger which had been set up was left untouched. But all the altar-cloths, the cover of the communion-rail, the curtains of the confessional chairs, the cover on the chancel, and the cloth over the chalice had been stolen. The vestry-door had been forced open with a crowbar and the vestry had been ransacked.

... The main task of the priest, who was later driven out of the country, during these terrible weeks and months was to collect the dead. He used to go through the streets with a sledge or a handcart, and gather the dead or else retrieve their bodies out of the ruins. Forty-five bodies — women, soldiers, children, people who had been killed or beaten to death by the Russians, — were buried together in one huge grave. Russian soldiers even went so far as to violate some of the female corpses that lay in the mortuary at the cemetery prior to burial.

Report No. 18

Nesselwitz, near Cosel, Upper Silesia ³⁴

The curacy and community of Nesselwitz included 1,884 Catholics (1942) and only 10 persons of other denominations. A chapel, dedicated to St Sebastian, was already in existence in 1842. The present church was built in 1911 in the baroque style. The curacy was founded on September 4th, 1909. Until that time Nesselwitz had been part of the parish of Hartenau, near Neustadt, Upper Silesia.

... The Russians seized the village. And very soon children and women between the ages of ten and sixty were being raped by the Russian soldiers. The next hordes of Russian soldiers who came into the village were even worse than the first lot. They stole and demolished the vestments, altar-cloths, and surplices in the church. Clothing, machines, bicycles, typewriters, cattle, and other possessions were stolen from the inhabitants of the village. This went on for days on end, the Russians threatening to kill anyone who offered the least resistance. The following persons were shot by the Russians: a disabled ex-serviceman, a man

³⁴ s. *Beitraege*, Vol II, pp 830, 827

whose leg had been amputated, a landowner in Juliusburg, whom the Russians assumed to be an officer, and a married couple in Altenwall from whose house German soldiers had escaped when the Russians arrived. Most of the landowners had temporarily left their property in order to get away from the fighting. For weeks on end, girls and women spent the night out in the open fields to avoid being molested by the Russians, or else gathered in crowds in some inn or other. Life was very hard...

...Then the Poles took over. The first ones to enter the village were probably partisans, who had been in the services of the Russians. They molested the population day and night and stole what little there was left. The inhabitants of the village sought to protect themselves by forming a kind of defence organisation and setting up all kinds of alarm devices in order to summon help in case of need. The people suffered terribly under these conditions. By day they were expected to work, and at night they had hardly a moment's peace, but were terrified to death lest the Poles might raid their houses at any moment.

Report No. 19

Buchenau, Upper Silesia, near Ratibor³⁵

The curacy and community of Buchenau included 3,246 Catholics (1942) and 87 persons of other denominations (1929). The church, dedicated to the Holy Virgin, was built in 1908. From October, 1926, onwards Buchenau was part of the parish of Markdorf, but had a priest of its own. The curacy was founded on April 1st, 1927.

... The fighting front came to a standstill in our district as the two towns of Ratibor and Rybnik refused to surrender. Countless men, youths, women, and girls were abducted, and many of them never returned. The number of deaths increased alarmingly from day to day. Thirty of the finest and largest houses were burnt down...

The church was ransacked completely by the Russians. Vestments, altar-cloths and covers were stolen, the organ was damaged, the tabernacle was forced open and thrown into the churchyard, and the font was pulled down. The spire of the church was hit by an artillery shell, which fortunately, however, did not cause very much damage. The roof of the church was badly damaged... All the valuable stained-glass windows were smashed. The vicarage was very badly damaged, both inside and outside. Two rooms were completely demolished, owing to the fact that the Russians blew up the safe in the church which contained all the important parochial registers and documents, chalices, ciboriums, records, and other valuables, including the funds of the church. The remaining rooms at the vicarage were ransacked by the Russians.

³⁵ s. *Beitraege*, Vol I, p. 412 ff.

The district of Ratibor was then handed over to the Polish administrative authorities. The inhabitants were no longer allowed to speak German. A new era began in Upper Silesia. All public inscriptions in German had to be removed, and streets, villages and towns were renamed. It was an era of unrest. There was a constant coming and going of people who had become homeless, of those who had been abducted, of Polish and Russian civilians, and of prisoners-of-war, who had been released.

Hunger-typhus raged and there were many victims, both young and old. Some of the families were very badly hit. In the year 1945 there were 156 deaths in Buchenau as compared to a yearly average of 40. No ration cards were issued. All the shops had been demolished, and the cattle, goats, and cows had been slaughtered. The fields could not be ploughed because there were no horses. But the greater our need the more did charity manifest itself, and God, who had sent us these trials, gave us His help again and again.

The days and months passed slowly. Winter came and went. All the Germans who refused to apply for registration as Polish subjects were forced to leave the country.

Report No. 20

The Parish of Preussisch-Krawarn, near Ratibor, Upper Silesia ³⁶

The parish of Preussisch-Krawarn included 1,437 Catholics (1942) and 11 persons of other denominations (1929). A parish-church (The Holy Virgin) is mentioned in historical records as early as 1223. At the beginning of the 17th century Preussisch-Krawarn was part of the parish of Makau, but from 1677 onwards it was an independent parish. The church was rebuilt in wood in 1709. The present church was built in the years 1909 and 1910 in the Romanesque style.

Despite the fact that the fighting front was quite close, three hundred persons remained in Krawarn. On the Wednesday in Easter-week, that is on March 28th, 1945, the Russians launched an attack on the village.

The village was heavily shelled early in the morning, bombs were dropped, and then tanks entered the village from the west, coming from the direction of Amandhof. The serious damage done to the church and the vicarage was due to this unexpected attack... Seven large bombs fell in the immediate proximity of the church and the vicarage, and one of them damaged the barn at the vicarage very badly. As a result of the pressure the outer doors and the windows of the church were blown out and the roof of the vicarage was torn off. Nine shells hit the church-tower, and the middle bell was riddled with holes... On May 11th, 1945, I returned to Krawarn. I was speechless with horror as I slowly walked through the church. The altar was empty, the tabernacle

³⁶ s. *Beitraege*, Vol III, p. 643 ff.

had been forced open; the door of the safe had been battered in with crowbars until it finally yielded. The small chalice and ciborium had been removed. The dove over the altar had been shot down, and the heads of the statues of the Holy Mother and St. Aloysius had been knocked off. Parishioners told me that the Russians had dressed up the two statues in surplices, before they smashed the heads, and had pretended that they were a bridal pair. They had smashed the crucifix on the altar and pulled up the stones of the side-altars. There was not a single surplice, a vestment, or a carpet left. The stained-glass panel over the pulpit, which represented the Birth of Christ and was a valuable work of art, had disappeared. The Russians had even ransacked the cellars under the church and had taken everything with the exception of some old church-records which were of no interest to them. It was here that I found the small monstrance, parts of which were later found on a dung-heap near Slawik. I managed to mend it and use it again.

... People had no time to attend to household jobs as the Russians made them work on the big estate every day. The Russians had a list of all their names; everybody had to put in an appearance, and if anyone tried to shirk, Russian soldiers promptly went to fetch him. Two groups were supposed to go and dig entrenchments for three days, according to the statements of the Russians. They did not return until six weeks later; indeed, some of them returned six months later. There were more than seven hundred Russians in the village. A Russian colonel with his staff and mess occupied the castle...

... From October onwards we were offered temporary Polish citizenship, "Obywatelstwo". The people of Krawarn were slow to avail themselves of this doubtful advantage. When they began to realize that an "obywatel" could get the Poles out of his house they decided to apply for Polish citizenship. This privilege was offered me three times in the course of 1945, but I refused to accept it, as I am a German, and did not want to remain in the country under such circumstances.

On June 3rd, 1948, I was unexpectedly expelled from Silesia. At eleven-thirty a commission from Ratibor arrived at my house. Militia prevented anyone from leaving the house. I was informed of the decision which had been reached by the Polish authorities, namely that I should be expelled from the country. I was then taken to the expellees' camp in Gleiwitz by lorry. The villagers immediately did everything in their power to set me free. They hired a lawyer at their own expense and my case was brought up in court at Warsaw. It is true that the charges which were first preferred against me, namely that I was anti-Polish, were refuted. I have always believed that the Polish-speaking population should be allowed their own rights and privileges, and in 1943 I was actually fined 1,000 Reichsmarks by the Gestapo for opposing Nazism and being kind to Poles. But there could be no doubt about the fact that I was German, both as regards birth and attitude, and for this reason, and also because my parishioners, including those who had been repatriated, were so fond of me, I was expelled by the Polish authorities.

Report No. 21

The Parish of Leobschuetz, Upper Silesia³⁷

According to the ecclesiastical census of 1935 the town of Leobschuetz included 12,300 Catholics and 1,500 persons of other denominations. The parish-church (The Holy Virgin) is mentioned in historical records for the first time in 1259. Various alterations and additions were made during the years 1903 to 1907.

A victim of the compulsory evacuation, carried out in September, 1945, of those Germans who were still in Leobschuetz, describes his experiences.

At five o'clock in the morning, on September 26th, 1945, the Polish militia began raiding the houses inhabited by Germans. The German occupants were driven out into the streets, and the majority of them did not even have a chance to take a few of their possessions with them. They were then taken to the Marschke and Zilger camp, either by lorry or on foot. For the past six weeks the inhabitants of Schlegenburg had been interned in this camp. During the night the men had to stand outside in the open, in the pouring rain, without any protection or shelter. Next day the town-commander and the Polish militia assigned the internees to groups according to their ability to work: women with children, young girls, women with no children, men who were fit to work. We were told that women with children and old people would be sent to Germany, whilst the men who were fit to work, women who had no children, and young girls would remain behind in order to work. There were about three thousand persons crowded together in the camp. On September 27th, at about five o'clock in the afternoon, the people who had been chosen to be sent to Germany were taken along to the station. Father Ludwig Bogdanski, the Franciscan priest, was one of them. Precentor Borsutzki of Leobschuetz was in charge of the transport. After seventy to eighty people had been pushed into each cattle-truck like a lot of cattle, the train eventually set off at eight o'clock in the evening. Polish militiamen rode on the train to guard us. None of us knew where the train was bound for. On September 28th, we arrived in Neisse in Upper Silesia, and the train was left standing on a siding for four days. As none of us had been able to take any food with us and no one bothered to give us any rations we were practically starving. People began screaming for bread, but there was none forthcoming. Now and again the Polish militiamen opened the trucks and the occupants were allowed to get out and hunt for turnips and potatoes in the fields nearby. Whilst doing so, the Polish militiamen would come up and start beating them, especially the old women, with their rubber cudgels. Father Ludwig buried the first dead, seven in all, in the ramparts of the fortress at Neisse. They had literally starved to death. The journey continued. During the night Polish militiamen would enter the trucks and search the women's handbags and steal whatever they took a fancy to. Then they

³⁷ s *Beitraege*, Vol V, p 111 ff

would rob the men of their money. And they repeatedly tried to drag women out of the trucks in order to rape them. Whenever the train stopped somewhere in the country and the militia opened the doors of the trucks, everyone clambered out as quickly as they could and rushed into the fields to search for turnips and potatoes with which to appease their dreadful hunger. At each stop the dead were removed from the trucks and either buried along the railway-embankment, in trenches, or in the fields. Shortly before reaching Goerlitz the evacuees were robbed for the last time by the Russian and Polish guards on the train. On October 10th, we finally reached Loebau in Saxony, the German frontier station, and here for the first we were given food by the German authorities, — a quarter pound of bread, cream-cheese, and a plate of soup per head. From Loebau the train proceeded to Zittau in Saxony, and from there to Niederoderwitz. The journey lasted fifteen days and in the course of this time eighty-eight persons died of starvation and exhaustion. According to the camp authorities we were only going to stay at the former chocolate factory, "Kosa", for a few days, but we have been confined here for the past months, and it is almost as bad as being in prison. The Leobschuetz refugees moved into Rooms I and II, and there are about 600 persons in each room. The daily ration of food amounts to two and a half ounces of bread per head, a spoonful of soup made of rape-seed and dried vegetables and pieces of unpeeled potato. It is therefore not surprising that many of the refugees have fallen ill. There have been epidemics of typhus and scabies, and it is practically impossible to keep one's head and clothes free of lice. One hundred and thirty-seven children and old persons have died.³⁸

Report No. 22

Eichendorf, near Oppeln, Upper Silesia³⁹

The community of Eichendorf, according to the ecclesiastical census in 1942, numbered 1,026 Catholics and only a few persons belonging to other denominations. Eichendorf is part of the parish of Falkendorf.

... During the time the Russians occupied Eichendorf people were forced to work, but things were fairly quiet and orderly. Conditions changed, however, when the Poles took over Eichendorf in October, 1945, and it became Polish police and militia property. Whereas most of the neighbouring estates were not seized and occupied by Polish farmers until later, most of the farms in Eichendorf were declared state-property at the very beginning... The Russians had on the whole behaved fairly

³⁸ Cf also: Edgar Lehnert, *Leobschuetzer Rundbriefe*, printed by Schmidt, Mainz; Edgar Lehnert, *Unser Kreis Leobschuetz, Ein Erinnerungsbuechlein an die gottgegebene Heimat*, printed by Busch, Arnsberg — *Leobschuetzer Heimatbrief*, edited by Joseph Klunk, Munich 15, Schubertstrasse 2, 1950 ff

³⁹ s. *Beitraege*, Vol III, p 570 — s also *Heimatbrief Nr 7 des Kreises Trebnitz/Schl*, edited by A. and F von Kessel.

decently towards the German population, but under Polish administration a new era of cruelty and suffering began for the Germans. The Polish militia which so far had been quartered at Sauerbrunn Castle now moved into the inspector's house at Eichendorf. It consisted of a commanding officer, who was married, and eight militiamen, who were always armed with rifles and revolvers. They patrolled the countryside, either on foot or on bicycles, and it was their task to supply Eichendorf with sufficient German manpower. Many German families and individual persons were arrested and brought to Eichendorf. In fact, people were constantly coming and going, and Eichendorf came to be regarded as a kind of concentration camp, and was known all over the district as an inferno in this respect. Unfortunately a large percentage of the German population of this district were obliged to become acquainted with Eichendorf.

Report No 23

The Parish of Klosterbrueck, near Oppeln, Upper Silesia ⁴⁰

The parish of Klosterbrueck included 5,300 Catholics (1942) and 58 persons of other denominations (1929). In 1228 Duke Casimir of Oppeln transferred the nuns' convent at Rybnik to Czarnowanz-Klosterbrueck. The present church, dedicated to St Norbert, was built in 1653 in the baroque style. The convent was rebuilt in 1682 and the prelates' building in 1730. In 1810 the convent was secularized, and from 1902 onwards, under the name of St Heinrich Stift, and under the direction of the Sisters of St Hedwig, it served as a home for orphans, for the needy, and the aged. From 1810 onwards the church of the convent was also the parish-church. The pilgrims' church of St Anne's was built of wood in 1684.

The Diary of a Priest

January 21st, 1945. It does not matter what happens now. All the children who were at our home have been taken to safer districts. The home itself is practically uninhabitable as the doors and windows were badly damaged and the lamps fell from the ceiling when the two bridges over the Malapane were blown up. Strange to say, the population intends to remain here, and is not afraid of the Russians. The reports that in one village they raped all the women and abducted all the men and took them away to work somewhere must surely have been exaggerated. How dreadful it would be if Goebbels was telling the truth, after all!

January 22nd. Margarethe died in the night. For weeks she had been waiting and longing for death. Loneliness and fear broke the poor girl's heart. — It is as though the whole country were paralysed.

A mother with a small child and a little boy of ten came and asked us for accommodation. She did not want to spend the night all alone at the station. We took her and the children in, for there is plenty of room in our home. —

⁴⁰ s. *Beitraege*, Vol I, p. 400 ff

We are sheltering in the cellar under the church, — three priests, fourteen nuns, the woman and her two children, a Polish workman, and some of the domestic staff. We came down here at noon, after the Angelus. The machine-guns sound very near and some shells must have hit some of the buildings close by, because the house keeps trembling. The occupants of the cellar keep asking me what the Russians will be like. I keep asking myself the same thing. In Russia I only saw them as prisoners-of-war. What will they be like now that they are armed and the conquerors? — We have had our first encounter with them, and are somewhat relieved. They are not as bad as we had expected. When we heard the Russians moving about in the church up above, we went up to them. Two Russian soldiers looked in at the cellar-door and asked if there were any German soldiers there. There was a strange look of tenseness and fear on their faces. A Russian kept watch at the entrance to the cellar the whole night.

January 23rd. We are still in the cellar. After the fighting troops had moved on, a fresh lot of Russians arrived. Two of them entered the cellar, fired several shots into the ceiling, and asked us to give them our watches. They went off with fourteen wristwatches. Then three more Russians arrived. We three priests went along to the vicarage with them. They made the vicar bring out all the food he had and then the Russians regaled us with it. That is to say, only two of them. The third man stood there, looking on. He was a Pole and had, apparently, been forced by the Russians to come along with them. The Russians swallowed the food like wild animals, and they drank the wine as if it were water. "The war is good here", they kept saying. When they had had enough to eat and drink they let us return to the cellar. It was snowing outside, but the whole village was ablaze.

Later on they fetched us out of the cellar and made us go into the chapel. We were told to stay there. The chapel had not been touched. The only thing that had been stolen were the candles. They did not disturb us during the night. Now and again we heard the whining sound of shells. In the morning all three of us celebrated mass. Some Russians who looked in at the door went away again without disturbing us. After that, however, one lot of Russians after another arrived and as soon as they saw us in the chapel, they began to search us and question us.

January 25th. All night long Russians entered the chapel and searched and questioned us. They ordered the woman to go outside with her small child. Soon afterwards she returned and said that they had told her to bring them a watch, otherwise they would shoot her and the child. She took one of the Russians a small alarm-clock, and apparently he was satisfied. Then, however, he raped the woman and sent her back to us. She came back to the chapel, her small child in her arms, the tears streaming down her face. — Towards morning things quietened down.

They let us celebrate mass undisturbed, but we were not allowed to leave the chapel. There was a Russian on guard at the entrance. During

the morning three women from the village came to the chapel. The vicar hardly recognized them, for their faces were distorted with fear and terror. They told us that whole families had been shot by the Russians, simply because they had unsuspectingly mentioned that their sons had been killed in Russia or had fought there. Girls who had refused to allow themselves to be raped, and parents who had sought to protect their children, had been shot on the spot. What must these people think when they see girls preferring to be shot rather than that their bodies should be defiled. Poor Hedel, you wanted to enter a convent and devote your life to the Lord! Now you have had to sacrifice your life so soon and have pledged your vow with your very blood! — Although the women from the village had been allowed to enter the chapel they were not allowed to leave again. Several hours later an officer happened to appear. We negotiated with him and after a while the women were allowed to return home.

The Russians continue to search and question us. I felt quite sorry for one of them. He was a fat old man, probably a cattle-driver. He stood at the altar and shouted, "Documents!" I gave him the certificate I received in 1936 on being ordained as a priest by the suffragan bishop of Aachen. He looked at it for quite a time. Then he shouted "Photograph!" I had none. He walked out grumbling, his hand on his revolver. Poor man, I thought to myself, all your power lies in your revolver. Go back to Russia, and go and sit outside your little hut and chew sunflower seeds. That is where you belong and where you will feel at your ease and happy again.

January 26th. Last night was very troubled again. Fresh lots of soldiers kept on arriving and searching the house from top to bottom. Every time they came into the chapel it was always the same procedure. First of all they interrogated us priests. Apparently they think we are spies. And they refuse to believe that the nuns are members of a holy order. Every time the door is opened we start with fear. No one has had any sleep at all for the past few days. We are living on bread and sacramental wine. This morning a tall Russian walked in. He saluted. He did not search us, but simply asked us if we were hungry. We told him we were, and very soon he reappeared with a bucket of hot soup. He told us it was very rich, as they had killed our pigs. He talked to us for quite a long time and told us that he was a Mohammedan. In the course of the day, the good fellow brought us half a hundredweight of sugar.

January 27th. We priests were allowed out of the chapel for half an hour today in order to bury Margarethe in the yard. Poor girl, it is a good thing you were dead and so did not know what the Russians did to your body!

January 28th. The night was very troubled again. Only one of us celebrated mass this morning. Many of the nuns are getting very distressed and nervous. They sleep even less than we do. I often hear them say, "If only we had fled before the Russians arrived!" Of course,

it is much harder for them than it is for us. Even if the Russians do suspect us of being spies, they torture the nuns still more, and keep examining them to see if they really are nuns, tearing off their hoods, asking them how old they are, and why they have not married. —

I hardly know how to describe my feelings. I hardly know whether to be glad or not! Have I been restored to life and have I escaped death, or has a better life been denied me so that I must go on living in this land of death? Soon after mass a Russian entered the chapel. He was dressed in a snow-suit, his rifle on his back and a revolver in his hand. He stood at the altar like a lord and eyed us triumphantly. Then he ordered our old vicar to go outside with him. After a quarter of an hour they returned. The expression on the vicar's face was dreadful. He collapsed in front of the altar, muttering, "Shoot me, but shoot me here, at the altar. I refuse to leave the altar!" — The nuns screamed, "Don't shoot! Don't shoot!" The Russian grinned, triumphant in his power and strength. With a lordly gesture he walked away from the vicar. He now called to the other priest and me to follow him. We genuflected before the altar and followed him out of the chapel. Outside in the corridor he then searched us. He was not interested in seeing our papers; he simply removed whatever we had in our possession and whatever he took a fancy to. The things he did not want he threw onto the dirty floor. The corridors, incidentally, were spattered with blood. He even seized hold of my spectacles, and putting them on his nose, shouted, "Ah, professor!" When he could no longer find any possessions on us that he wanted, he took us into the cellar. He made us line up against the wall, pointed his revolver at us, and took aim. All I could think was, "Dear Lord, let me die so that Germany may live in Christianity!" But the Russian did not shoot us. He took us upstairs again, started searching us once more, undressed us, and kept shouting something that we could not understand. Finally he took us down into the cellar again. The other priest knelt down and spread out his hands. That, however, did not suit the Russian, and he made us stand side by side. He then made me remove the cross of my order. He loaded his revolver and pointed it at my face. I do not know why I was so calm. I looked him in the face. Suddenly he let out a shout and went out of the cellar, and that was the last we ever saw of him. We got dressed, picked up the things that the Russian had thrown down onto the dirty floor, and returned to the others in the chapel. They had heard the shots and were firmly convinced that we had been killed. The Lord had spared our lives.

January 28th. The others told me that there had been a lot of Russians in the chapel during the night. I lay on the steps in front of the altar and slept, and the Russians only woke me twice.

January 30th. Last night was dreadful. An old, grey-haired officer entered and started conversing in a friendly manner with the vicar. He told us confidentially there was likely to be some heavy fighting in this district, as there were heavily-armed German SS troops, standing in

readiness on the opposite bank of the River Oder. He advised us to leave. I did not believe a word of what he said. I knew from the look in his eyes that he was lying. The vicar informed him that we should remain here whatever happened. Then, all of a sudden, he began to show a marked interest in the nuns. Suddenly he stumbled through the chapel, collapsed in front of the altar, and lay there, groaning. When the vicar asked him what was the matter, he jumped up, drew his sword, and started jabbing at the wooden pews with it, in a rage. He then went up to the other priest, took hold of the latter's head, forced it down on to one of the benches, and pretended he was going to hew it off. He was talking away angrily all the time, but we could not understand a word of what he said. Suddenly he dealt the priest a savage blow on the head, making it bleed. Thereupon the Russian became even more enraged; he rushed up to some of the nuns, ripped their garments, and began beating them with his sword. Finally he dragged one of the young nuns into a corner in order to rape her. There was nothing we could do, but pray to the Lord that she would be spared. Suddenly the door near the altar opened and a tall, young officer appeared. He immediately realized what was happening, ran towards the back of the chapel, seized hold of the other officer, threw him to the floor like a sack of flour, put his foot on his chest, and tore the sword out of his clutches. Then he called to two soldiers, and they picked up the old officer and threw him out of the chapel as if he were a log of wood. He turned to us and told us that we need no longer fear lest the man return, and said that he would post guards in front of the chapel to make sure that no Russians would enter during the night. All was quiet for the rest of the night. We gave thanks to the Lord for having saved us in this dreadful hour of need.

February 2nd. I am no longer at the convent, but am now staying here, at the house of a vicar. On January 31st, a number of Russian officers came to the chapel and told us that we must leave the house within ten minutes' time. It was no use our objecting, so we each of us took a little of our luggage that we had stored in the chapel, and left. It was a cold, windy night as the Russians led us out of the house. Once we were out on the road they left us alone. We intended to tramp to the next village, which was four and a half miles away. There were Russian guards posted in front of all the houses, and when they saw us, they stopped us, took some of our possessions from us, and then allowed us to continue on our way. When we were about halfway to the next village we were once more stopped by Russian guards. They took us to an empty house and made us stay there overnight. They deprived us of all the possessions they took a fancy to, and also molested the younger nuns. Next morning we split up into groups, each group going to one of the various farms in the neighbourhood. Together with four of the nuns, I went to the vicar in the next village. His house is full of Russians, but he refuses to allow anyone to enter his bedroom, and the Russians have not molested us. So I am fortunate to be here. So far I have not seen any of the Russians living here, although I can hear them all day long and all night, too.

February 6th. Today I took the holy sacrament to a dying woman in the next village, which lies in the heart of the forest. The vicar tried to dissuade me, but I got there safely. It was lovely to walk through the silent, peaceful forest. A lorry with some Russians on it passed me in the village. When they saw me they shouted, like children, "Monk! Monk!", just as if I were some strange creature. On the way back I encountered two Russians. They wanted to arrest me, and said I must be a spy, as I had no papers on me. They threatened me with their rifles, but then they eventually let me go. They are just like children playing at war.

February 14th. Ash Wednesday. The people are singing Lenten hymns. They are seeking to banish their misery by singing. The Mater dolorosa re-echoes throughout our country. Girls and women are not only strewing ashes on their heads, but are also rubbing their faces with them so as to appear old and protect themselves from being molested by the Russians.

February 18th. When we came out of church after divine service the Russians were standing outside. They made the people get onto the lorries and took them off to work somewhere. They were not after the men and old women, but only after young girls. A regular hunt began in the village.

February 28th. During the night the Russians stormed the vicarage. They searched the whole house for firearms. They locked me in a room and insisted on talking to the vicar alone. The firearms were supposed to have been hidden in the wine-cellar, but they failed to find any. Finally they said they wanted wine. The vicar told them that he had none. They did not believe him, and threatened him with their rifles. But he could produce no wine for them, so they took him away on a lorry. Next day he returned, and told us that the Russians had not driven him very far, but had made him get out and had told him to procure wine immediately, as they would return in an hour's time, and would set fire to the vicarage if they got no wine. The vicar had then hidden in a house nearby and had kept watching the vicarage to see whether it was on fire, but nothing had happened.

March 5th. There was a considerable commotion during the night. It was not the Russians, however, but the nuns from the village, who came to seek shelter at the vicarage. They told us that the Russians had arrived at the house where they lived, shortly before midnight, and had taken four of the nuns with them. They had then been tortured and raped by officers for several hours. Finally they returned, their faces swollen and beaten black and blue. The nuns were terrified of going back to the house.

March 9th. A mother told us that Russians had raped her young daughter during the night. As they were Russians who were billeted in the village she went to the commanding officer to make a complaint. He asked to see the girl, and when she appeared, he, too, raped her, and then sent her home.

March 10th. Today I went to the convent where I had been at the time of the Russian invasion. The nuns had only been allowed to shelter in the village for a few days. Then the Russians, who boasted that they were as good as the German SS troops, had driven them back to the convent, beating them with their whips on the way. During the first few days the Russians had forced them and the vicar to clean the building. Everything of any value had been stolen. The parish-church has been ransacked completely. The tabernacle has been broken open. People from the village found parts of chalices and monstrances in the fields. The Russians slaughtered pigs in the vestry, and left what they did not eat lying on the floor. All the surplices have disappeared. The Russians set up a hospital at the convent and made the nuns work for them. When they finally left, the nuns remained at the convent.

March 11th. All the men in the village have been ordered to report. We went to report, together with the vicar, but they sent us home again.

March 13th. The men have been taken to camps. Will they be sent to Russia?

March 14th. Polish militia arrived in the village and set up a police-station. The villagers were all very relieved.

March 15th. A general assembly was held by the militia. The people were disappointed in them. Orders have been issued that no one may speak German. The people are to supply the militia-guards with furniture, household utensils, linen, and food. Things are as bad as they were under the Nazi regime.

March 17th. Today we heard bad news from the neighbouring village. I went there early in the morning and found the convent empty and the nuns in hiding at various houses in the village. The Mother Superior told me that Russians arrived last night and forced their way into the convent. The vicar and the priest were locked in one of the rooms and placed under guard. Then the Russians made all the nuns assemble in one room. Some of the younger nuns had managed to hide in the nick of time, in the water-cistern up in the attic. The rest of them were treated in a dreadful manner. They tried to defend themselves, but it was of no avail. They were brutally raped by the Russians, — even the oldest nuns, who were eighty. For four hours the Russians ransacked the house, behaving like wild animals. In the morning they then boasted in the village that there were no longer any virgins at the convent.

20th. Two mothers came and told us that the Russians had taken their daughters to the next village and were refusing to let them return home. The girls were being raped day and night by the Russian officers. A number of mothers came and asked us to give them certificates of baptism for their sons. The Russians had taken their fourteen-year old sons away and refused to believe that the boys were so young. — The Polish militia has started raiding and searching the houses, and stealing whatever the Russians left behind.

March 27th. The Russians come into the village every day, looking for women and girls to work for them. Every time they find someone they drive them out onto the street with the butt-end of their rifles. A Polish woman, who once worked in this village, keeps showing the Russians where they are likely to find women and girls. A girl who was looking after her invalid-mother was driven out onto the street, and the Russians also took some women, who had young children to look after, away. Together with the vicar, we tried to intervene, but the Russians attacked us with their rifles. Persons who are seized by the Russians and taken away to work somewhere are not even allowed to take a change of clothes or any possessions with them.

March 28th. On the way to town a Russian female partisan stopped me and wanted to take me off somewhere, to work. In the end, however, she let me go.

April 1st. Easter. I preached to the children in German. In the afternoon the vicar was arrested and taken away. The militia led him through the village as if he were a criminal. Once again orders have been issued that no German whatsoever is to be spoken. So there can be no more religious instruction. The grown-ups here in Upper Silesia speak a kind of Polish dialect, but the children only speak German. Satan is among us once more. His uniform is a different one, but his attitude is the same. In fact, this new Satan seems even more dangerous than the other one. He boasts of being Catholic and keeps talking about Czenstochau.

April 5th. A girl who has been forced to cook for the militia told me that she could not stand things there any longer. She said that she could hear men and women, who were being maltreated by the militiamen in the cellar, screaming all day long. Yesterday they led an old forester through the village. They made him carry a swastika-flag in his hand and say "Heil Hitler". When they got him to the headquarters of the Polish militia they took him into the cellar and beat him so badly, that he had to be taken away on a cart next day, as he could neither walk nor stand.

April 13th. My relatives arrived here yesterday. The house in Neisse was burnt down, my sisters were raped, and one of them is now suffering from venereal disease as a result. The apartment belonging to my other sisters in the town has been occupied by Poles, who refuse to leave and also refuse to give my sisters any of their possessions. My ninety-year old grandmother in Neisse was carried from one house to another, when the town was on fire, and then died.

April 15th. The militia are carrying on worse than ever. They are following the example of the Russians as regards looting and raiding the houses. The only thing they do not do is rape the girls in the village. All the militiamen brought girls of their own with them and are living with them.

April 24th. On the way to town I noticed that there were a number of large camps all along the railway-embankment. Poles from Ukraine,

who were forced to go along with the Russians, are said to be living in these camps. No one bothers about them. A German priest, who can speak Polish quite well, holds a religious service for them every Sunday. He told me that they were poor and kindly people who had been driven out of their homes.

May 1st. Divine Service. Armed militiamen entered the church. In the afternoon there was a general assembly and the commanding officer said there were to be no more services for the next six months.

May 11th. More and more Poles are swarming into the town. The Germans are being turned out of their dwellings. No ration cards are being issued. The people are beginning to starve.

May 12th. A German woman took her child that was ill to a Polish doctor. He sent her away, saying, "You have no money anyway to pay for my services."

May 18th. The war waged by the Poles against all that is German is becoming more and more acute.

May 25th. On the way to Berlin, in Liegnitz, on the motor-road: people are being driven out of the German villages by Polish militia. Countless sad treks, consisting of old men, women, children, and sick persons on carts, pass by. They have been forced to leave their homes and their villages within ten minutes' time. My German brethren, I was proud of you when I saw you, for none of you wept and none of you complained. Silently and proudly, you went your way, even though your fate was so bitter. After seeing you bear your troubles so bravely, I feel that I must no longer be despondent as far as Germany's future is concerned.

May 29th. In Cottbus I met some acquaintances on the street, — a young married couple. They were pushing a perambulator, containing a cardboard-box. They said, "Our baby is in that box. We are going to bury it. We buried our other little one a week ago. They died of starvation. Or maybe there was something else the matter with them. There is no food, no doctor, and no medicine to be had!"

June 12th. The people in Berlin are in dire need. But at least, they only have to put up with the Russians, whereas we have the Poles as well, and people say that the latter are even worse than the Russians.

June 19th. There were a lot of refugees from Silesia at the station in Luebben. A crowd of ten- to fourteen-year old Ukrainian boys was swarming round those refugees who had a lot of luggage. And they were stealing quite openly. I remembered once reading a book about Russian groups of youthful bandits.

July 10th. I arrived in Beuthen today. The Polish militia is resorting to dreadful measures against the Germans. All the houses, street after street, are being cleared of German inhabitants. The people are forced to leave and are not allowed to take any of their possessions with them. Many of the menfolk have not yet returned home from the war, or else

they have been abducted by the Russians. No one knows where the people who are being driven out of their homes are taken to. Some say, to Auschwitz.

July 15th. In Gleiwitz conditions are even worse. I found hardly any of my old acquaintances at all. Everyone keeps wondering how long these conditions will persist.

July 17th. Considerable commotion in our village as regards the militia. The commanding officer shot one of the Poles and then he shot himself. Actually, no one is very surprised.

August 3rd. Houses are constantly being searched by the militia. At night Germans are being abducted in such numbers that their relatives are afraid to remain in the village.

August 9th. I got as far as Liegnitz by train. When we got there the train stopped for a whole day. Other trains passed us, containing Germans from Upper Silesia. The trucks of these goods trains were locked and the people looked out through the bars. They told us that they had been locked in for five days, — men, women, girls, and children. They had nothing to eat. The food they had managed to take with them had been used up long since. They said that the militia on guard on the train were fairly sensible, but maintained that they themselves had nothing to eat, either. There was not very much we could do to help. We took them some hot water from the engine and that helped a little.

August 12th. During the night our train moved on. About fifteen bandits attacked and robbed us. They included two Ukrainian women. They let us keep our clothes but ransacked our bags, threatening us with revolvers whilst they did so. Russians and Poles did the job together. They left the train in Hainau and carried off their booty.

August 20th. We all heaved a sigh of relief once we were out of Polish occupied territory. We had lost practically everything, but at least, there were no more Poles about. I left my relatives here, and, together with another priest, I then immediately returned to Upper Silesia. It took us a night to reach Liegnitz, and in the course of this journey the train was boarded at least twelve times by bandits, who searched us. They did not steal anything, but then, of course, we had nothing left for them to steal. Before crossing the Lusatian Neisse and proceeding into Polish occupied territory we boarded a train containing about seven hundred Germans, who, unsuspectingly, were intending to return to Silesia. Only a few of them allowed themselves to be persuaded by us that it was safer to turn back than to proceed to Silesia. After crossing the Neisse the train was stopped by Polish militia. All the Germans had to get out and were driven to a camp, where all their possessions were taken from them. Next day they were sent back over the Neisse. They little dreamt when they left their homes and fled from the Russians that their return would be no less tragic.

August 22nd. Conditions are the same everywhere, — Germans being taken away by militia. They are trying to make Silesia Polish, and in order to do so are resorting to crime, robbery, maltreatment, and murder. In every town and village in Silesia the Poles have affixed placards bearing the words, "The harvest is like the seed!" What they mean by that, I do not know. Are they referring to the downfall of the Nazis as indicating the nature of the seed they once sowed, or are they referring to their own future harvest from the seed they themselves are now sowing?

August 23rd. One thing has recently struck me quite often, namely that the Russians are more friendly towards us when they discover that we are not Poles but Germans. In fact, they have often asked me whether I was Polish or German. Maybe the Russians have realized that they get on quite well with the Germans. It is quite wrong to say someone is typically Russian, for the people are as varied and as different as the various parts of the country. Russian customs in one village are quite different from those in the next village. In fact, even the individual Russian differs in his behaviour and attitude from one day to the next. I have heard of cases in which Russians brutally raped mothers whilst their small children were present. After that they took the children on their knee, gave them bread and butter and sugar, and played with them. I am convinced that the Russians would be quite different if there were no Bolshevism in their country. They are spiteful in a manner that is different from that of the Poles. The maliciousness of the Polish militia reminds one of the maliciousness of the German SS troops. It is cold and venomous, whereas Russian maliciousness is somehow warm-blooded.

November 18th, 1945. I have returned to Silesia for the third time. Breslau has so far not recovered from the war at all. The Germans there are forced to wear a white band on their sleeve. There are more Germans than Poles in Breslau. Religious services are still held in German. I did hear, however, that German had now been forbidden in the surrounding districts of Breslau.

November 20th. It is strange, but the same question that is asked everywhere, — in Beuthen, Oppeln, Breslau, and even in Poznan, by Germans and Poles alike, is, when will war break out again! The Poles maintain that their country has become an insignificant part of Russia and affirm that Russian tyranny, if it continues, will mean their ruin. Various Poles told me that they could only obtain food at exorbitant prices, that they had no coal, that the menfolk were being drafted for military service by the Russians, and that only a war could save them. But a war brings destruction with it, too!

Satan once ruled in Germany. He continues to rule in Russia and in Poland, too, in fact, everywhere where right and justice are distorted and warped. Power may deceive others for a long time, but in the end it will be revealed in its true colours.

*Report No. 24***Some facts about the parish of Schalkendorf, near Oppeln, Upper Silesia, at the time of the Russian invasion in 1945**⁴¹

According to the ecclesiastical census of 1942 the parish of Schalkendorf, included 4,058 Catholics and 752 persons of other denominations (1929). The church, dedicated to the Vision of Archangel Michael, is mentioned in 1673. The present church was built in 1830.

The inhabitants of Schalkendorf got into a dreadful panic when they heard that the Russians were coming. About ninety per cent of the population remained in the village, but many of them lost their lives as a result. Of the many dreadful casualties that occurred, here are but a few:

German soldiers had gone into hiding in the forest nearby. As soon as the Russians had occupied the village they began to hunt for the German soldiers, and numerous persons were suspected of having given them a temporary hiding-place. An old couple who lived in a small house near to the forest and had taken in an old man, who had fled from the village, were accused of harbouring a German soldier. The Russians searched the whole house, but found no soldier. Thereupon they boarded up the doors and windows and set fire to the house. The three old people burned to death inside the house. — In Kupp the Russians set fire to the village and half of it burnt down, including the Protestant church and the vicarage. A boy who had belonged to the Hitler Youth Movement is said to have shot a Russian officer. Thereupon the Russians made him dig a grave for himself and his parents and then shot the three of them. Because of what had happened the Russians wrought havoc in Kupp, killing numerous persons and setting fire to about seventy houses. Ninety persons, mostly women and girls, had sought shelter at the vicarage. Despite the shortage of food, the vicar managed to obtain enough to feed all those he had taken in. One night, however, drunken Russians entered the house. In order to protect the women and girls, Father Grelich⁴² (who was retired, but still lived at the vicarage) stood on guard outside the room in which the womenfolk were assembled and refused to let the drunken Russian soldiers enter. Thereupon they shot him and threw his body into the garden. In Bruenne they shot young Father Janotta⁴³, and in Rutenau Father Zimolong⁴⁴ was stabbed to death, either by Russians or by Poles. Many women and girls were tortured to death because they defended themselves. In Doebern a young girl, Maria W., was shot by a Russian soldier because she refused to let him rape her. About fifteen women and children fled from a house in Doebern in order to avoid being

⁴¹ s. *Beitraege*, Vol III, p. 278

⁴² Cf. *The Martyrdom of Silesian Priests, 1945-46*, p. 41, for details regarding the death of Father Robert Grelich

⁴³ Cf. chapter on the martyrdom of Silesian priests, Section VI.

⁴⁴ Cf. *The Martyrdom of Silesian Priests, 1945-46*, p. 106, for details regarding the death of Father Zimolong

molested. They were pursued by the Russians and shot. — The poor Germans endured the most dreadful sufferings at that time. They lived in constant fear and trembling of what the Russians would do to them. And yet, on the other hand, some of the Russians were kind and helped the people in their need.

Report No. 25

The Parish of Schoenkirch, near Oppeln, Upper Silesia ⁴⁵

The parish of Schoenkirch included 4,510 Catholics (1942) and 20 persons of other denominations (1929). The church, dedicated to Bishop Stanislaus, who was martyred, is mentioned in historical records in 1285. The present church was built in the years 1919 to 1922 in the Renaissance style. Until 1810 it belonged to the theological college in Oppeln.

After they had seized the town of Oppeln, the Russians set fire and laid waste to it. They treated the inhabitants most brutally, and murdered hundreds of women and children and shot whole families. In the neighbouring village of Boguschetz there were as many as thirty to forty casualties. After this massacre the Russians took Schoenkirch. Here, they did not behave quite as brutally. They did, however, abduct many of the men and send them to camps, where they were forced to do hard labour. Eighty per cent of these men, most of whom were farmers, died of starvation in camps near Odessa. In addition, the Russians raped many of the girls, and looted and ransacked all the houses. True, there is always a certain amount of looting during a war, whatever the country, but the Russians carried it to excess, and that was the dreadful part about it. It was obvious that they were trying to terrorize the population into submission. It was just as if they kept saying to themselves, "We've stolen such a lot of your possessions and you still look quite respectable!" All day long they would demand either vodka, cebula (onions), orgoki (cucumbers), or panienka (young girl). All these things were demanded in the same tone of voice, followed by the command, "dawaj, dawaj!" (quick, quick!). There was only one horse left in the whole village, and cows were even rarer. But it is not so easy to break the spirit and the resistance of the people of Upper Silesia. Everybody started brewing vodka. The price for two bottles was a cow and for three bottles a horse. In this way it was possible to buy back from the Russians what they had stolen a few days previously. They went on stealing, and we went on buying back what had been stolen. In this respect the boys of our village excelled themselves. When the Russians came through the village with a horse that they had stolen, tied onto the back of their carts by a long rope, the boys of the village would follow them down the street. As soon as the Russians turned off into a side-street the boys would hastily cut the rope and sneak off with the horse as quickly as they could. In this way we managed to get some of our horses back again.

⁴⁵ s. *Beitraege*, Vol II, p. 797.

The Parish of Neustadt, Upper Silesia ⁴⁶

According to the ecclesiastical census of 1942 the population of the town of Neustadt included 14,711 Catholics and 142 persons of other denominations (1929). The church dedicated to St Michael, the Archangel, is mentioned in historical records in 1321. The present church was built in the years 1730 to 1738 in the baroque style, whilst the Church of the Brethren of Charity (St Peter and St Paul) was built in 1785.

Conditions in the parish rapidly changed for the worse at the beginning of 1945. On January 18th, the schools were suddenly closed down, and on the same day thousands of refugees from the industrial areas arrived in Neustadt by special trains. About forty thousand persons swarmed into the town and the neighbouring villages. The Russians had invaded Upper Silesia and had pushed forward as far as Gross-Strehlitz. As the inhabitants of Neustadt saw the dreadful misery of the refugees as they passed through the town, in a never-ending stream, they wavered in their decision to leave their homes, and most of them resolved to remain in Neustadt, refusing to believe any reports of atrocities by the Russians. Unfortunately, however, they were later to realize that the atrocity reports in the newspapers were harmless, compared to reality... On Passion Sunday, March 18th, 1945, the Russians seized the town and began ransacking and looting.

... All the shops and houses had been looted and ransacked in the morning, but it was not until noon that the Russians entered the vicarage. After having smashed all the windows, they then set about ransacking the place, and left it in a filthy state... Russians continued to enter the houses and molest the occupants.

The most dreadful part of the Russian invasion were the cases of rape which occurred. Women and girls were molested day and night. Many of the girls were raped as often as ten times a night, and even more, so that in the end their mothers sacrificed themselves so that their daughters might be spared. The Russians did not even spare old women of seventy. Many of the girls committed suicide in their desperation. And the clergymen found it difficult to console and give courage to the women, who were broken in spirit and body after the dreadful experiences they had gone through. It was futile to go to the Russian commanding officer and complain. What was so dreadful, was that the women were often raped in the presence of their own children. The way in which the parishioners bore up under all this trouble and suffering was amazing. There was no house and no apartment in which they did not assemble to pray to the Lord. And whenever the priests managed to visit them they all took Holy Communion...

⁴⁶ s. *Beitraege*, Vol I, p. 365 ff

On my return to town I found the vicarage and the church ransacked and in complete disorder. The tabernacle on the side-altar had been forced open, and there were marks on the tabernacle on the high altar, indicating that attempts had been made to force it open, too. The consecrated bread and wine had been removed beforehand.

During the night of August 7th to 8th, notices containing the following instructions were affixed to all the buildings in the town. 'All Germans must line up outside their houses. immediately. Fifty-five pounds of luggage maximum.' Soon afterwards the Polish militia arrived and drove the people along to the so-called German ghetto, beating and whipping them to make them hurry. Three streets in the town had been assigned as the German ghetto. In the course of the morning seventeen militiamen came to the vicarage and searched all the rooms and ransacked them. The inhabitants of Ring Street were robbed once more and had no possessions left when they were taken to the ghetto. Owing to the fact that there was not enough room in the ghetto for the many people confined there, conditions soon became unbearable. And to make matters worse, the food was dreadful. A cordon of militia sentries was placed round the ghetto and for ten days no one was allowed to go into the town. The people were desperate. First, they had had to put up with the Russians, and now they were being maltreated in a most brutal manner by the Poles, who deprived them of the last of their possessions. After a while the Poles forced them to work like slaves, and, more often than not, all they received was a little food and no pay. Men who had been regarded as political suspects had been taken to central Russia by the Russians, but the methods now resorted to by the Polish secret police were even worse than the methods of the German Gestapo. They ill-treated the Germans in a most brutal manner, locking them up for weeks on end in cellars. And the worst of it all was that innocent persons were made to suffer. Those who really were guilty of political crimes had taken good care to make off before the Russians invaded the country. Every German now had to wear a white band on his or her sleeve with a big black letter N on it, which stood for the word, Niemcy, meaning German. They all wore this mark of distinction, proudly admitting that they were German. The morale of the people was indeed amazing...

Report No. 27

The Parish of Dittersdorf, near Neustadt, Upper Silesia⁴⁷

The parish of Dittersdorf included 1,707 Catholics (1942) and 25 persons of other denominations (1929). The church, dedicated to St. Catherine, is mentioned in historical records in 1331. The present church was built in 1857.

... A very pious old spinster (Mathilde Meja) was raped by the Russians one night. She ran out of the house, fell into the well at Heinisch's

⁴⁷ s. *Beitraege*, Vol III, p. 516 ff

mill, broke her skull, and was found dead there a few days later. Joseph Kuehnel, the sexton, refused to tell the Russians where he had hidden his two daughters. In his fear he ran out of the house, whereupon the Russians shot him in the legs. He was in hospital for a few days, but then he died, as he had had leg-trouble for some time.

Police Superintendent Paul Simon, who was a prominent member of the National Socialist Party, and Police Inspector Pratsch fled in their cars before the Russians arrived, but they left the lists of names of those persons who were members of the National Socialist Party behind in their writing-desks. The Russians therefore began to hunt down all the men who were under 56, and a very considerable number of them were abducted. Many of them died in Caucasia, whilst others were tortured to death by the Poles at the dreadful camp at Lamsdorf...

Maria Goretti in Silesia

... Two of the villagers, who were invalids, were shot by the Russians because they failed to get out of bed when ordered to do so. One of them was Johann Huebner, who had been paralysed for years, and the other was Joseph Haase, a former farmer, who was well over eighty and very ill. A young girl of seventeen, Cecilia Werner, was returning home from work one evening when she was assaulted by a Russian soldier. She tried to defend herself with all her strength, whereupon the Russian beat her, strangled her, and then finally shot her in the neck.

... About the middle of June, 1945, a few Poles appeared and decided to settle in the village. Armed with rifles, they began to molest the inhabitants. By July 1st, crowds of them had drifted into our village and all the neighbouring villages, early on the Sunday morning they surrounded all the houses and began to ransack them systematically. They affirmed that they were searching for firearms, but they took whatever they set eyes on, in particular food. In the meantime large units of Polish militia had arrived, consisting for the most part of bold and impudent youths, former partisans, ex-convicts, and concentration camp internees. Their behaviour and that of their officers towards the inhabitants of the village and even towards priests and monks was abominable. They were constantly drunk and gave vent to their rage upon the Germans. The weeks during which the Russians had occupied the village seemed peaceful in comparison. In fact, we were always most relieved when Russians came through the village and admonished the Poles. To begin with, I was allowed to hold divine service in German. From time to time a Polish priest conducted a service in Polish, but he was not desirous of settling in the village as, so he told me, he did not want to live amongst such Bolshevist bandits. — The German farmers who had lived in the district for years had long since been driven off their farms and now lived crowded together in attics and small rooms... On one occasion my watch was snatched from me by an officer of the militia who entered my house. The Russians had

also taken it from me on one occasion, but had given it back to me when I pleaded with them. When I ventured to protest the Polish militiaman got hold of me and started beating me with his rubber cudgel. Many of my parishioners were dragged into the cellars by the Polish militiamen and badly ill-treated. Girls were raped after they had been made to starve for several days on end. Germans who attended church were often molested on the way home and pelted with stones. Mrs. Andersch, the wife of a farmer in Kroeschendorf, was killed when a Polish youth hurled a hand-grenade at her, which, incidentally, killed him, too.

Finally, it was my turn to be assaulted by the Poles. One night I was awoken by cries for help. Four drunken Poles, led by a Polish worker, who had formerly been employed in my house, had forced their way into the vicarage and were beating my sister-in-law and my housekeeper. When I appeared on the scene they immediately made for me, swearing at me obscenely. One of them held my hands so that I could not move and the others hit me in the face and on the head with their fists. Then someone dealt me such a blow on the chin that I fell to the ground. They kicked me and dragged me towards the door. I managed to struggle to my feet and ran out into the yard, but they pursued me and soon caught up with me. Then they tripped me up and I fell on a stone and cut my face. They continued to belabour me as I lay there, until I thought my last hour had come, and I prayed to God to help me. Suddenly I heard my housekeeper screaming for help in the street. A light went on in the mill opposite, and this must have scared my assailants. for they ran away as fast as they could. I had been saved in the nick of time. My face was bleeding and swollen, I had bruises and lumps all over my head, and considerable pains in my ribs and in my left hip-bone. That was the thanks I got from the Poles for having protected them during the Hitler regime and for having allowed them to attend the services at my church in the days when this was forbidden. All the Poles who had ever worked at the vicarage had been treated well, they had received plenty of good food and new clothes as well, — including the Pole who had participated in the assault. Of course, he had been drunk at the time, but nevertheless! Two days later, when he was sober, he came to see me and, with tears streaming down his face, begged me to forgive him. The last horse I had, which the Russians had not taken because it was too unmanageable, was stolen the night I was attacked by the Poles, — that was probably the main purpose of their assault. — Three days later a tragi-comedy was enacted at the vicarage. The commanding officers of the militia who were stationed in the village and in the neighbouring districts all appeared at the vicarage and assured me that they deeply regretted the incident, adding that the miscreants would be severely punished, — which, of course, never happened.

The Parish of Langenbrueck, near Neustadt, Upper Silesia ⁴⁸

The parish of Langenbrueck included 3,710 Catholics (1942) and 486 persons of other denominations (1929). The church (Exaltation of the Cross) is mentioned in historical records in 1331. The present church was built in the 16th century. In 1661 a chapel was added and in recent years other additions have been made.

On Sunday morning, September 2nd, 1945, just as everyone was leaving church after divine service, a mine exploded on the road near the level-crossing. Drunken Polish soldiers had been driving up and down in a cart on the road and in doing so had driven over the mine. All of them were injured, but no one was killed. Langenbrueck had been part of the fighting front for three months, from March to May, 1945. That same evening, the Poles rounded up all the German men between the ages of fourteen and sixty. There were about fifty-six of them, and they were taken to Polish headquarters at Neustadt, Upper Silesia, for interrogation. I was one of them. We were not questioned so much as to the explosion, but as to whether we had been members of the National Socialist Party. They also asked us whether we had hidden any possessions or valuables anywhere. They beat us mercilessly, the young boys in particular, until the latter admitted having concealed certain valuables in hiding-places. Next day the Poles sought out the hiding-places and removed all the things concealed there.

On September 9th, seventy-eight of us were thrust into a coach and taken to Lamsdorf (the Polish penal camp for Germans). When we got there we all had to report to the guards on duty, separately. Then we were taken into the next room and beaten soundly to make us confess that we had been partisans, or until the commanding officer called to the guards to stop. Needless to say, none of us allowed ourselves to be forced into making a false confession of this kind. During the first three weeks we were not allowed out of the shed we had been put into, except in the mornings when we all had to line up to go to the latrines and in the evenings for roll-call. During the whole of this time we were constantly ill-treated and beaten by the guards and by the so-called Polish commanding officers, who were actually Germans who spoke Polish fluently and hoped to derive material benefits from their conduct. During the night they used to wake us, question us as to whether we had been members of the National Socialist Party, and then start beating us. At night, when we took our shoes off we had to put them in rows and by next morning the best pairs had always disappeared. The same procedure was carried out as regards our clothes, and by and by the guards deprived the prisoners of all the decent clothes they had had on arriving at the camp and substituted shabby and tattered garments for them.

⁴⁸ s. *Beitraege*, Vol. II, p. 538 ff.

Our daily food-ration consisted of two potatoes in the morning, a quarter of a pint of soup at noon, and a slice of bread at night. We should have starved had not the women of our village taken turns to tramp all the way from Langenbrueck to Lamsdorf, a distance of twenty-six miles, once a week to bring us food. They used to bribe the sentries to let them talk to their menfolk on the other side of the barbed-wire fence for a few minutes and hand them some food.

As time went on we began to be treated slightly better. My father worked as a cobbler for the Polish soldiers, and I worked on a farm for some time, and then later on, until Christmas, at the Zierz sawmill in Lamsdorf, together with twenty other men, where we were treated quite humanely.

In January and February we were for the most part engaged in excavating the huge graves at Lamsdorf. These excavations were carried out by order of the Russians. Thousands of Poles and Russians were alleged to have been buried in Lamsdorf. We excavated about twenty graves, each containing a hundred bodies. When the Russian doctors, however, ascertained that most of these persons had died of some illness or other, the camp authorities began to treat us more humanely.

In February and March a serious epidemic of typhus broke out at the camp. About nineteen persons died every day. To begin with, there had been seventy of us in our room, but in the end there were only thirty-four of us left. Thirteen of the fifty-six men from Langenbrueck died of hunger-typhus. In addition to prisoners from various districts, the entire male population of the village of Bielitz, near Falkenberg, was interned at Lamsdorf. Practically all the men from this village, with the exception of five, died in the camp, most of them of starvation. The dead were cast into huge graves by the prisoners. The guards then delighted in making the prisoners stand on the brink of the grave and say a prayer and sing hymns.

Report No 29

The Parish of Langenbrueck-Wiese Graeflich, near Neustadt, Upper Silesia⁴⁹

... At the end of June, 1945, Polish settlers from the Lemberg area and Communists from Cracow arrived here and set up the Polish administration. The Germans were turned out of their homes, deprived of their property, ill-treated, and robbed time and time again. On one occasion when I wanted to go to the vicarage to see whether everything was alright there and wanted to tend the vicarage garden, I was stopped by Polish militiamen. They made me clear away dung with my hands, whilst they stood by, threatening to shoot me. The fields and the forest

⁴⁹ s *Beträage*, Vol III, 541 ff.

near Langenbrueck were full of mines, and accidents were constantly happening. As far as I know, there must have been at least ten casualties. On one occasion a Pole trod on a mine, and thereupon all the German men of the village were rounded up and most cruelly beaten by the Polish militiamen. Mr. Ecke, the schoolmaster, who, to begin with was arrested because he had allegedly once been a captain in the army, was among those who were beaten. I managed to clear him of suspicion, however, and got him released. When Joseph Rohner, the farmer in Wiese, was arrested and taken to Neustadt, I was, unfortunately, not so successful. When I went to the Polish headquarters at Neustadt in order to put in a good word on his behalf, the Poles not only refused to listen to me, but they threw me out and even kicked me down the stairs. Rohner later died in Polish captivity. As a result of the constant threats to their safety and their fear of being driven out of their homes, people were nervous and intimidated. On October 1st, 1945, sixty men of the community were arrested and after having been brutally treated were taken to the camp at Lamsdorf, near Falkenberg. All attempts to procure their release proved futile. The womenfolk used to tramp the twenty-six miles to the camp every fortnight in order to take their menfolk food and clothing. Thirteen of the men, including Joseph Reinkober, and Farmer Lorenz, died in the camp.

There were always new cases of people in the community being ill-treated. Old Irmer, the cobbler, was beaten to death, and Biener, the butcher, was ill-treated to such an extent that he died of his injuries. Women, too, were constantly being beaten.

Report No. 30

Wiese Graeflich, near Neustadt, Upper Silesia⁵⁰

At the time of the Russian invasion of Silesia in January, 1945, a troop-train from Upper Silesia, containing prisoners-of-war, passed through Wiese Graeflich, which is part of the parish of Langenbrueck. A number of dead were taken from the train and their bodies were thrown into two shell-craters and hastily covered with earth. In the summer, in about July, German men from Langenbrueck and women from Schnellewalde were ordered by the Poles to exhume the corpses (about 38) with their hands. The corpses were then examined and photographed, and later buried in Neustadt. Despite the fact that they washed their hands with lysol and other disinfectants, the "grave-diggers" could not get rid of the stench of the corpses for days.

⁵⁰ s *Beitraege*, Vol. II, p. 538

*Report No. 31***The Parish of Wachtel-Kunzendorf, near Neustadt, Upper Silesia**⁵¹

The parish of Wachtel-Kunzendorf included 1,418 Catholics (1942) and 15 persons of other denominations (1929). The parish-church (Assumption of the Virgin Mary) is mentioned in historical records in 1385. The present church was built during the years 1726 and 1727 in the baroque style. Until 1810 it belonged to the monastery in Neisse.

... On Whit Monday, May 20th, we reached home once more. Some of the old people, who had remained in the village, had been shot dead by the Russians. They included three men and three women, and eighty-year old Joseph Tille, one of the church elders. A man of fifty from the village had been shot in the Sudetenland by the Russians. Two old men and two women who were invalids, who had remained behind in the village, had disappeared.

... About 154 buildings had been burnt down. The church had suffered most damage. The church-tower had been demolished, and the roof of the church had been badly damaged by shells. The interior was a dreadful sight. The wooden altar had been knocked over, and the statues of the angels on both sides of the tabernacle had been smashed. The tabernacle had been pulled out of the wooden casing. Prior to our leaving the village we had emptied the tabernacle. The figure of St. Michael in the chancel was riddled with bullets. The vestry was an even worse sight. The large cupboards containing the vestments had been knocked over and partly smashed; the vestments lay scattered all over the floor, torn and dirty. The gold braiding had been torn off and the red robes of the servers had been cut to pieces, and the material probably used as flags. All the altar-cloths and chalice covers had disappeared. The safe had apparently been forced open with some difficulty, to judge from the marks on it. Two chalices, two ciboriums, and two silver candlesticks were missing. Pages had been torn out of the church-records that had been in the safe. What distressed me most was the loss of a valuable reliquary containing tiny fragments of the Cross.

... At the middle of June, 1945, the "Polish liberators" arrived in the village. Eight hundred Poles "settled" in the village. All property was declared Polish state-property, and the German farmers were forced to work on their own land as farm-labourers. Young Polish boys, armed with rubber cudgels, supervised the work on the fields. Very often, for no reason whatsoever, they would beat the Germans, men, women, and girls alike. As all the supplies of grain and potatoes had been seized by the Poles there was soon a shortage of food, and old persons in particular, who were no longer able to work, suffered most in this respect. Voluntary collections of food were organized among the Germans and free meals were served in an attempt to remedy the situation. A special unit of one hundred men was billeted in the village in order

⁵¹ s. *Beitraege*, Vol. III, p. 561 ff.

to keep an eye on the Czech frontier nearby. A customs-house was converted into barracks. The entire fittings, such as furniture, crockery, linen, pictures, etc., were requisitioned from the Germans by the Poles. After a few weeks the unit moved on, taking all the fittings with them. A new unit arrived and the requisitions began anew. In addition, the soldiers also requisitioned things of their own accord. Hardly a night passed but they forcibly entered the houses, and beat and robbed the Germans. All this was done under the pretence of looking for partisans.

... The trek to Neustadt, two and a half miles away, in the dreadful heat was torture in the truest sense of the word. Militia, armed with rubber cudgels, beat us to hurry us along. Some of the older people who could not walk so fast threw their luggage away, which was later picked up by Poles, who followed in cars. Polish civilians and soldiers snatched the people's last possessions from them, although actually it was not until we reached Neustadt that they really robbed us of everything we had. When we got there hundreds of Poles were already waiting for us. They fell upon us, snatching everything they could lay hands on. I shall never forget the heart-rending sobs of those who were robbed. Threatening the priest with his revolver, one of the militiamen robbed him of his suitcase, which not only contained some of the sacred vessels of the church, including a valuable paten, but also clothing. All that most of us now had left were the clothes we were wearing. And there was probably no one among us who did not come in for his share of beating on this occasion. All the notices affixed to the buildings, incidentally, stated that the expulsion would be conducted humanely and that every expellee could take as much luggage with him as he could carry. We were then transferred in cattle-trucks to the transit camp at Leobschuetz. We spent two days there in the open, in the terrific heat, and were given nothing at all to eat or drink. After the camp authorities had searched us once more to ascertain whether we still had anything in our possession, we were crowded into cattle-trucks, and on the evening of July 4th, our journey westwards began at last.

Report No. 32

The Parish of Falkenberg, Upper Silesia ⁵²

According to the ecclesiastical census of 1942 the town of Falkenberg included 2,670 Catholics and 3 persons of other denominations (1929). The church (Assumption of the Virgin Mary) is mentioned in historical records in 1228. The present choir was built about 1500, the vaulting at the beginning of the 17th century, the nave in the 18th century, and the cupola in 1865. The church became a collegiate church with a provost and eight curates in 1389. The chapter ceased to exist in the course of the 17th century.

... The first few weeks under Russian occupation! The most dreadful part of the occupation was the complete lack of any morals on the part of the Russian soldiers towards the womenfolk of the town. Even girls who

⁵² s. *Beitraege*, Vol II, p. 781 ff.

were mere children were raped. Man, when his feelings are governed solely by licentiousness, is worse than an animal. I myself was arrested by Russian soldiers whilst returning to Falkenberg from Friedland, and was taken to Jakobsdorf for interrogation. From there I was then taken to Mogwitz, from there to Neisse, and finally to Hennemersdorf. All the men who had been arrested by the Russians were imprisoned in a shed. Some days later a few of us, including myself, were separated from the rest, who were then taken to Russia.

When I returned to Falkenberg in May, 1945, it looked very desolate. The church had been broken into and the interior was a dreadful sight. The tabernacle had been torn out of the high altar and was missing. The altar-supports had been removed and all the altar-cloths stolen. In addition, all the gold vessels, chalices, monstrances, ciboriums, and patens had been stolen, as well as all the sacred linen and the priest's robes. Most of the surplices had either disappeared or been cut to pieces and scattered all over the floor. The steel safe in the vestry had been overturned, the door had been forced open, and the contents removed. The organ had been damaged; some of the organ-pipes lay strewn about the floor, but despite the fact that it was damaged the organ could still be used. All the carpeting and felt had been removed. There were holes in the windows, and one very large hole under the tower. The pews, pictures, and statues had not been damaged, as compared to the church at Rogau, for instance, where the Russians hewed off the heads of the statues in the church and and the heads of the statues of Christ in the churchyard. The tabernacles in all the churches have been badly damaged, so the Russians seem to have gone about their work of looting the churches systematically. The windows of the chapel at the castle have been badly damaged, and so, too, has the organ, but it can still be used. All the chalices, monstrances, ciboriums, and vestments, however, are missing. But perhaps Father Alban removed them to a safe hiding-place. The altar has not been damaged, but the tabernacle has been opened and the key is missing. In the vault the coffins that had not been walled in have been forced open... The church in Schedlau has also been ransacked completely, but the altar is undamaged. The roof adjoining the tower has been hit by a shell and is very badly damaged. The family-chapel of the earls has been broken into and the vault has also been forced open. The churchyard has not been damaged...

A penal camp for Germans has been set up in the barracks on Lamsdorf Square where prisoners were formerly housed. The inhabitants of whole villages, including women and children, have been taken there. They have been treated most brutally, many of them tortured to death and shot, and many of them have died of starvation. Many of them, too, have died of typhus. There must be plenty of people who in future times will still remember and describe the dreadful torture inflicted on the Germans at the camp at Lamsdorf. May God grant those who some day seek to avenge these atrocities a merciful heart. The inhabitants of the villages of Katzdorf and Lippen, which belong to the parish of Falken-

berg, have also been taken to the camp. A penal camp has also been set up in Falkenberg, in barracks opposite St. Hedwig's Hospital. To begin with, they put the prisoners who had been confined in the castle dungeon into the camp, but later on they sent Germans from Weidendorf, Kiefern-kretscham, and finally from Freudendorf and Stefansfeld there, and thus the inhabitants from five villages belonging to my parish were confined in the camp. The prisoners at the camp are made to work very hard. In fact, the fate of slaves in the olden days could not have been worse. Every time the inhabitants of a village are taken to the camp the militiamen surround the village in the early morning hours to prevent anyone from getting away. Then they go from house to house and drive out all the Germans onto the streets. The latter are then taken to the camp and when they arrive there are immediately searched and deprived of their possessions. They are now at the mercy of the camp commander. They are housed in sheds and have to sleep in wooden bunks, only being allowed one cover each. Every morning they are marched off to work. Some of the Poles for whom they are forced to work treat them fairly humanely and give them something to eat, but on the whole most of them have to be satisfied with the meagre fare they receive at the camp. To begin with, the dead were buried near to the camp, but later we received permission to bury them in the churchyards. We were not, however, allowed to take the corpses through the town, but had to proceed to the various cemeteries by a roundabout route...

Report No. 33

The Parish of Falkenberg, Upper Silesia⁵³

The Polish Police Prison

... The prison consisted of a small, damp cellar, about six feet high, with an area of four square yards, and one tiny window. I was prisoner No. 5, a number which I later kept at the camp at Lamsdorf. In addition to myself, there were four men and one woman confined in the cell. In view of the general state of confusion, the woman did not even know whether she was a prisoner or not. During the daytime she was allowed out of the cell and had to cook for the Poles, but at night she was brought back to the cell again. There were neither chairs, tables nor bunks in the cell. Three days after my arrival there, a lot more prisoners were brought in. Some of them had been arrested on the street, others had been dragged out of their houses. Most of them, like myself, did not even know why they had been arrested. Of course, we were Germans and therefore regarded by the Poles as criminals. Finally, there were forty of us crowded together in the cell. As there was no chair or bunk to sit

⁵³ s. *Beitraege*, Vol V, p. 199 ff

on, we crouched on the ground for days on end, back to back to support each other. At first the food was plain but not too bad. As the number of prisoners increased, however, the rations became less and less, and, incidentally, worse and worse, in fact, sometimes unfit for consumption. Furthermore, the Poles resorted to more and more drastic methods of interrogation from day to day. New arrivals appeared in the cell, covered with blood. Those who told the truth and said that they had not been members of the National Socialist Party were beaten unmercifully. The Polish police were firmly convinced that everyone who was German must have been a member of the Party, and also, that all men who were tall must have been members of the German SS troops. One morning, two of the men crouching on the floor of the cell failed to move. They were dead, but this fact did not in the least disconcert the Poles. On the contrary, the number of prisoners increased more rapidly than ever. There were now more than a hundred of us in the cell and there was not an inch of space. So eventually, heavily guarded, we were transferred to the cellar of a villa which had once belonged to the former administrative head of the district. Here, a women's section was now set up, and a further innovation was the interrogation-room. It had formerly been the wash-house, and its present equipment consisted of a table, several chairs, and a chopping-block! Many of the new prisoners, whether men, women or girls, were forced to strip before interrogation and were then interrogated naked. As this was not done in every case, I assume that it was a measure resorted to by the Poles in order to force the person being interrogated to admit where he or she had hidden gold or silver valuables. Whoever refused to make such an admission or was not in a position to do so as he had had no valuables to hide, was then seized by five or six militiamen and thrown onto the chopping-block. It was useless to offer any resistance. The militiamen forced the prisoner down onto the block and then beat him until he fainted. Needless to say, many of the girls and women interrogated in this way were brutally raped and treated most inhumanely. The Poles trapped their fingers in the door and then closed and opened it. They drove small wooden wedges under the women's fingernails and toenails and then beat their victims. They even went so far as to trample on the girls and women with their hobnailed boots. Cries of pain re-echoed through the cellars day and night and made the rest of us sick with horror. The most sinister inquisition of the Middle Ages was surely not as gruesome and dreadful as the methods of the Poles, at whose mercy we now were. Their favourite kind of whip was one made of wire, knotted together. And they used cudgels, as thick as a man's arm, and also heavy tramcar-chains to beat the prisoners with. In fact, they tried to outdo each other in this respect and were encouraged in their efforts by "Lieutenant" Kuczmeczyk.

One of the prisoners, a workman from Falkenberg, was one day called an SS-man by one of the Polish militiamen. Other prisoners from Falkenberg said that the man in question had never been a member of the

National Socialist Party, the SS, nor any of the other Party organizations. But it was no use. One Sunday, as we were working on the playing-fields in Falkenberg, the militiaman in question suddenly started beating the man from Falkenberg, in the presence of his children, who had brought him some food. The man collapsed and he was dead by the time we carried him back to the cellar. The "Lieutenant" went into the matter, commended the militiaman in question, and had the corpse buried in the grounds of the villa. As often as I possibly could, I reported for work outside the camp so as to avoid the ill-treatment we were constantly being subjected to.

... On one occasion one of the younger militiamen kicked a number of the older prisoners in the stomach. His comrades, who were standing by, kept urging him on, their rifles raised, ready to fire, so that nothing should happen to him. The Polish guards were very fond of kicking us in the genitals, and, needless to say, many of the prisoners died as a result of this treatment.

Report No. 34

The Parish of Bielitz, near Falkenberg, Upper Silesia ⁵⁴

The parish of Bielitz included 956 Catholics (1942) and 12 persons of other denominations (1929). The church (St Catherine's) is mentioned in historical records about the year 1300. The present church was probably built before 1600, and the vaulting in the 18th century. Prior to secularization in 1810 Bielitz belonged to the primate of Breslau.

... We were completely cut off from the rest of the world. Of course, we knew that the war was over, but we were more than alarmed when, one day, a huge crowd of Poles appeared in the village. In fact, they outnumbered the inhabitants. We owned a large farm, and five Polish families promptly moved in. We continued to go about our work, hoping that conditions would change. They did, but unfortunately not the way we had expected. We were beginning to feel that our home was no longer our own. The Polish militia was constantly coming to ransack and loot the place. On July 14th, 1945, Polish militiamen came and drove us into one of the farm-buildings. They treated us most brutally, beating the men with cudgels as hard as they could. Farmer Drutschmann, who was seventy, collapsed under their blows several times, and so did old Farmer Schmolke, my neighbour.

Young boys and girls were allowed to return home, but the rest of us were locked in a stable, in which there was only one small window and a heap of dung. A number of the men had been released by the Russians previously and had now been taken prisoner once more. We were terrified of what the Poles would do to us. At intervals they came to fetch someone out of the stable and take him along to one of the rooms.

⁵⁴ s. *Beiträge*, Vol V, p. 240 ff

Finally, they came to fetch me, too. There were three Polish soldiers, one of them armed with a heavy cudgel, standing by the door, when I entered the room. An interpreter said, "You will receive ten strokes, and if you scream, twenty!" When they dealt me the third blow I collapsed, and I do not know how many strokes I received altogether. I summoned up my last ounce of strength and tottered towards home, a Polish boy following me all the way, shouting and making fun of me. I was so badly bruised that I could hardly sit or walk for days on end. On the same day that this incident occurred, the Poles arrested eight men and women and took them to the camp at Falkenberg. For the next few days they made us work on the weir in the next village.

On July 27th, at dawn, Polish militia surrounded our village. There were several big lorries standing in the village-square. As we looked out of the windows we were horrified to see Polish soldiers going into all the houses. Next minute the door was pulled open and a Polish soldier called out to us, "All Germans outside in five minutes!" My three children hurriedly pulled on their clothes whilst I hastily collected some basins and some food. The occupants of the houses, many of them bare-footed, came out onto the street, carrying their possessions in bundles. Even those who were seriously ill and confined to bed were turned out by the Poles. They took us to the camp at Lamsdorf, about two and a half miles away, which in former times had been a military training camp and also a prisoner-of-war camp. There they deprived us of all our possessions, our pots and pans and food. They even took away babies' napkins. Then they searched us. One woman had hidden a ring in her hair, and when they found it, they cut off all her hair. They found a postal-order, made out to police-sergeant D., in Mr. Schmolke's possession and thereupon they beat him unmercifully. They made him place his hands on the table and the soldiers belaboured them with blows, keeping time to a tune which they made the son of the village-schoolmaster play on the piano. After that they seized hold of poor old Mr. Schmolke, dragged him into one of the sheds, and beat him until he was dead. They made six of the German men put on steel-helmets, and started hewing at the helmets with axes. It was a dreadful sight. Blood was gushing forth from under the helmets. They gave us no food whatsoever for three whole days. They put us into separate sheds according to which group we belonged to, — all the men in one shed, children over ten in another shed, women who were fit to work, those who had no children younger than ten, and so on. I was thus obliged to part from my ten-year old daughter, who remained in the same shed as my mother, who was seventy-five, and my sister, who was an invalid. Two of my brothers were also at the camp. The days and weeks that followed were dreadful.

Whilst I was in the camp I lost my ten-year old daughter, my mother, my sister, my brother, my two sisters-in-law, and my brother-in-law.

*Report No. 35***Ellguth-Hammer, near Falkenberg, Upper Silesia⁵⁵**

Hammer was part of the parish of Friedland, Upper Silesia, as early as 1669. It probably existed long before the Thirty Years' War and suffered considerably during that period. In 1930 Ellguth and Hammer were joined into one community, which included about 335 Catholics.

When the Russians took Hammer in March, 1945, they robbed, molested, and raped the inhabitants the same as they had done everywhere. Ellguth-Hammer was not damaged at all by bombs or shells. As the parish-church at Friedland had been very badly damaged by bombs and could not be used for services, holy mass was usually celebrated at the parish-church in Ringwitz, half a mile away, or at the temporary church at Floste.

... One day towards the end of August, 1945, the entire village of Ellguth-Hammer was suddenly surrounded by Polish militia. All the inhabitants, old and young alike, were arrested and taken to the penal camp at Lamsdorf, about nine miles away. Only a few of the inhabitants managed to escape by running into the woods. No reason was given for this action by the Poles. Perhaps they arrested the inhabitants of the village and took them to the camp because none of them wanted to apply for registration as a Polish subject. Whatever the reason, innocent and guilty were treated alike in the same brutal manner. They were confined in the camp for about eight weeks. During this period they had to put up with every form of ill-treatment imaginable. The food was dreadful. The day's ration usually consisted of soup, made of water and containing two or three bad potatoes. One day the Poles set fire to a shed crowded with people who were ill. Many of them were too weak to escape into the open in time and perished in the flames. Those who did manage to get out in time were either shot or beaten to death. During these weeks of suffering and horror about forty men and an even greater number of women from the village of Ellguth-Hammer died in the camp. Even more would have died had not their relatives supplied them with a little extra food. Those who survived their dreadful experiences were completely exhausted, their bodies and faces were swollen, and they were on the verge of a nervous collapse. They were only released from the camp on condition that they applied for registration as Polish subjects whilst still interned and swore to keep silent about their experiences in the camp. Many of the people who were released died on their return home as a result of the tortures they had undergone. Some of them, too, contracted typhus and died in the hospital at Friedland.

⁵⁵ s. *Beiträge*, Vol III, p. 609. Source. Friedrich Loch, *Geschichte der Landgemeinden der Pfarrei Friedland, O/S*, p. 59. hand-written records, 1949

*Report No 36***Floste, near Falkenberg, Upper Silesia**⁵⁶

Floste was also part of the parish of Friedland, Upper Silesia, as early as 1669 (Two miles away from the parish-church) It included about 413 Catholics (1929) and only a few persons of other denominations

... On March 19th, 1945, the Russians seized the village. A period of indescribable suffering now began. All the men who were fit for work were rounded up and abducted, and most of them were taken to Central Russia, where they were forced to work extremely hard and only given very meagre food-rations. Thus most of the families in the village were deprived of their breadwinner and were very soon in dire need. Cattle and supplies of grain were confiscated by the Russians. Girls and women were molested, assaulted and raped in a most brutal manner.

... With the arrival of the Poles, who settled in the country in ever-increasing numbers, the distress and sufferings of the German population grew worse from day to day. Robbing and looting were the order of the day. The villagers were not even allowed to sleep in peace at night. Many people died of starvation and infectious diseases. The Germans lived in constant fear and trembling of being arrested by the Poles and taken to the concentration camp in Lamsdorf, only a few miles away, which had been set up by the Poles in the autumn of 1945. It had formerly been a military training camp. Many of the inhabitants of the neighbouring villages in the district had already been taken to this camp, which was known to be the most dreadful and inhuman camp of its kind. The only consolation that helped to give the people strength and courage during these terrible times, when they were constantly tortured by the fear of being taken to the camp, was Holy Communion. They offered up a silent prayer to God all day long, and each day hundreds of persons took Holy Communion.

*Report No. 37***The Parish of Friedland, near Falkenberg, Upper Silesia**⁵⁷

The parish of Friedland, Upper Silesia, included 5,720 Catholics (1942) and 187 persons of other denominations (1929) Holy Trinity Church is mentioned in historical records in 1335 The present church was built in 1908 and 1909 The old tower with its early Gothic portal was preserved as part of the new building

... On March 15th, 1945, at three o'clock in the morning, Russian artillery launched an attack. For the rest of the night and during the early morning hours the sound of Russian cannon and shells re-echoed through Friedland. Soon after nine o'clock in the morning the first lot of Russian planes appeared and dropped bombs on the town... Several

⁵⁶ s *Beitraege*, Vol III, p 598 — Loch, *loc cit.*, p. 12.

⁵⁷ s *Beitraege*, Vol. III, pp 579-584. — s. also detailed description, Loch, *loc cit* , p 60.

bombs came down near to the vicarage and the parish-church... As a direct attack on the town was imminent, there was nothing for the inhabitants to do but to leave as quickly as they could. Unfortunately, many of them, in seeking safety, were killed by Russian shells. In the course of the fighting at Plieschnitz a Russian officer was killed. Thereupon the Russians immediately shot twenty Germans, some of them civilians. The Russians also shot three persons in Gross-Schnellendorf, twelve persons in Klein-Schnellendorf, and many others elsewhere...

... We reached our destination at last. It was a dreadful sight that met our eyes. Friedland, which six days ago had been a pretty little town, was now a heap of ruins. About one-third of the houses had been destroyed. We passed through one street after another in which the buildings had been demolished, either by shells, bombs or fire. The big flour-mill in the centre of the town was still ablaze. Carcases of animals and corpses of human beings, — soldiers, civilians, Germans, Russians, and children, lay strewn about the streets.

... Once a week or a fortnight all the men imprisoned in the cellars at the Russian headquarters were interrogated and were then taken away, 250 to 400 men at a time, escorted by Russian military guards. They never knew where they were being taken or what was going to happen to them. We later learned from an interpreter that they were forced to march long distances on foot, despite the fact that many of them had serious foot-trouble. They would be taken to Brieg, a distance of thirty-eight miles; from there they would have to march to Laband near Gleiwitz, another sixty-nine miles. Many of them were taken to Central Russia, to Crimea, to the Ural district, and to Siberia. And many of them died in Russia. They were usually made to work on railways or bridges, repairing the damage caused by fighting operations, or in factories or mines. The food they received during the time they were confined in the cellars at the Russian headquarters, before they were taken to Russia, was very poor. Their relatives were not allowed to get in touch with them, and, in any case, they were constantly under guard. Finally, however, we appealed to the Russian commanding officer and also to some of the guards, who were kind-hearted and pretended not to notice us, and in this way we managed to take the prisoners a little extra food every day. Their relatives used to bring us the food, as we lived opposite the Russian headquarters and knew what conditions were like; we then used to pass it on to the prisoners. In this way we managed to alleviate some of the sufferings of those who had been arrested.

... One of the most sacrilegious crimes committed by the Russians when they occupied the town was the havoc wrought in the parish-church of Friedland by a group of Russian soldiers. Whilst we were in Jamke they entered the church in Friedland and broke open all four tabernacles. They removed the heavy metal tabernacle from the high altar, smashed the doors, stole the sacred vessels, and scattered the consecrated wafers on the ground. The other tabernacles had been empty, and only the doors

were damaged. They removed the altar-slabs, opened the sepulchres, and scattered the sacred relics. The altar-steps had been smashed and the Russians had knocked the heads of two of the statues off. Most of the servers' robes, part of the sacred linen, and a number of surplices had also been stolen. The churches in Gross-Schnellendorf and Klein-Schnellendorf were likewise ransacked and looted, probably by the same lot of soldiers.

Report No. 38

Groß-Schnellendorf, near Falkenberg, Upper Silesia⁵⁸

Gross-Schnellendorf was a community which belonged to the parish of Friedland, Upper Silesia, and included about 330 Catholics and only one person of another denomination (1929). It is mentioned for the first time in 1306, in the historical records of the diocese of Breslau.

... The Russians now swarmed into the village in crowds (March 19th, 1945). Groups of them entered the houses, searched every room, and removed anything they took a fancy to. Clocks and watches, flashlights, razors, clothes, and food were the most sought-after objects. They fired shots in the rooms of the houses, regardless of whether anyone might be killed. Incidentally, five persons were killed in this manner. The worst part of all was that they brutally raped women and girls. The school was very badly ransacked. Groups of ten to fifty Russians, most of whom were drunk, raided the school-buildings, in which a large number of Germans had sought refuge, seized hold of the luggage belonging to the Germans, searched it, kept things of any value, and scattered the remainder on the floor. Very frequently, one of the Russians would grab hold of a German, point a revolver at him and take aim, turning the muzzle upwards at the last moment, and causing the bullet to whizz past the German's face and land in the ceiling. They even went so far as to fire shots through the doors. There was no limit to the Russians' brutality, and the situation at the school grew so dreadful that, finally, those of us who had sought refuge there decided to leave all our possessions and our food supplies behind and go back to Friedland, where we hoped we would perhaps be safer. Our trek back to Friedland was probably the most dangerous thing we ever did in all our lives. We were obliged to pass endless columns of Russian tanks, and enemy planes flew over us the whole of the way until we reached the town, which we found sadly demolished and still ablaze. Three young women from Friedland, who lived in Gross-Schnellendorf, remained behind to nurse the wounded German soldiers, of whom four had already died. The remaining eighteen were shot by Russian hordes a few days later. They lie buried in the school-garden.

The church had fortunately not been damaged very much. The tabernacle had been forced open, and the chalice was bent, but the ciborium was undamaged. The monstrance had been taken to pieces and the various

⁵⁸ s. *Beitraege*, Vol III, pp. 605-606.

⁵⁹ Cf. Loch, *loc cit.*, p. 28.

parts were later found in several houses. The ceiling above the altar had collapsed owing to the fact that the Russians had set up a machine-gun in the loft. Some Russian soldiers, who apparently were pious, had decorated the altar very beautifully according to Russian fashion for the Russian Easter Feast.

Report No. 39

Puschine, near Falkenberg, Upper Silesia⁶⁰

Puschine, a community which has a castle-chapel, is part of the parish of Friedland, Upper Silesia. In 1929 the community, including the estate, numbered 617 Catholics and 5 persons of other denominations. It is a very ancient village and is mentioned in the "Liber Fundationis Episcopatus Vratislaviensis", which gives a list of the various districts and localities which belonged to the diocese of Breslau at the beginning of the 14th century. The castle probably dates from the time of the Templars (13th century) and no doubt possessed a chapel even in those days. The last owners were the Counts von Ballestrem.⁶¹

... The Russians seized Puschine on March 18th, 1945. They set fire to the castle and the revenue-office on the estate, both of which were completely destroyed by fire. The farm-buildings on the estate, however, were not damaged. Three houses in the village and also three barns were burnt down. As they had done elsewhere, the Russians also raped many of the women of the village. Three of the women, Miss Aust, Miss Jung, and Mrs. Blum, were shot after they had been raped. An old married couple, Paul and Maria Langer, both of them over eighty, were shot dead in bed.

In June, 1946, seventy-four families were expelled from Puschine, only twenty being allowed to remain. Polish families promptly seized possession of the seventy-four houses that had been vacated by the Germans.

Report No. 40

The Parish of Grottkau, Upper Silesia⁶²

The parish of Grottkau included 4,850 Catholics (1942) and 892 persons of other denominations (1929). A church (St Michael's) is mentioned in historical records in 1282. The present church was built about the end of the Middle Ages. The chancel was built in the second half of the 13th century. Sebastian von Rostock, the primate of Breslau, was born in Grottkau. From 1344 to 1810 the duchy of Grottkau belonged to the primates of Breslau.

... There was some street-fighting during the night. Next morning, Monday, February 5th, 1945, all was quiet again. As I looked out of the vicarage-windows at about nine o'clock in the morning I noticed some Russian soldiers, walking down the street quite calmly, smoking cigarettes. The town had been occupied by the Russians. The church-tower had been

⁶⁰ s *Beitraege*, Vol III, p 597.

⁶¹ s *Loch, loc. cit.*, p 4 ff

⁶² s *Beitraege*, Vol I, p. 304 ff — Cf also: *Grottkauer Rundbrief an die Gemeindemitglieder*, Augsburg

hit by two shells and the roof was damaged. Actually it was not until a few days later that the church itself was damaged by German artillery. All the windows were smashed, a shell ripped open the ceiling over the confessional chair in the Rosary Chapel, and the vaulting over the high altar was badly damaged. The organ and most of the altars were wilfully damaged later on by the Russians...

... One evening three Russian soldiers raided the vicarage and threatened to shoot me if I did not hand over all the watches and jewelry in the house to them immediately. After lengthy negotiations, carried on partly in Polish, partly in German, and by means of gestures, at the end of which I complied with their request, they ordered me to obtain women for them. On my refusing to do so they made as if to shoot me, but at precisely this moment the guns in the town went into action again and three women rushed into the house in order to seek shelter. The youngest of them was immediately raped in the dining-room by one of the Russians, whilst the other two held the other two women and me prisoners in the kitchen, threatening us with their revolvers. Eventually all three soldiers went down into the cellar, where there happened to be several bottles of sacramental wine. Whilst they were down there we all of us hurriedly crept out of the house. From the stone-cross near the church I could see a light moving from room to room at the vicarage, as they searched the place. I could even hear them smashing wooden crates in the cellar, and I assumed that they were about to set fire to the house, as they had done in so many cases. Finally, under cover of darkness, I hurried along to the house of Mr. Sch., the painter, in the Wallgasse. He had taken in many of the homeless, and when I got there, I found that there were about sixty persons in the kitchen and in two of the rooms. They had not been able to get into touch with any other members of the community, and were therefore very glad to see me. I spent the remainder of the night, sitting on a chair, after we had all prayed together and I had given them the holy sacrament. It was here that I first learnt of the dreadful extent to which the girls and women had been raped by the Russian soldiers. In order to avoid being molested by soldiers I hid in a hay-loft for three days, but the cold weather forced me to leave my hiding-place. After that I stayed at the house of Family J. and with the parishioners at the house of Mr. Sch., the painter. It was whilst I was at the latter's house that I was molested by a young Russian lieutenant. He was utterly godless and the sight of my priest's robe apparently infuriated him. He kept insisting that I deny the existence of God and, seizing hold of my breviary, threw it onto the floor. Finally, he dragged me out into the street and pushed me against a wall in order to shoot me, after ordering me to hang my pouch containing the holy wafers on a garden-fence. I dropped my pouch over the fence into the snow-covered bushes in the hopes that it would be safe there. He had just placed me against the wall when all the men, women and children, who had been sheltering in the house of Mr. Sch., appeared on the scene. They stood round us, pale and terrified. Thereupon he began to scatter the

crowd by shooting at random in every direction. When he and I were finally alone once more he pointed his revolver at me, but it was empty. He started reloading it, but whilst he was doing so, two other officers, who had apparently heard the shots, came into sight. They rushed up to him and snatched the revolver from his grasp before he had a chance to shoot me. I was still standing against the wall when he suddenly lifted up my pouch out of the bushes in the garden, opened it, and threw the holy wafers onto the ground, before I had a chance to prevent him. He then tried to pick up one of the holy wafers with the end of a stick, but kept missing his mark; his two comrades finally dragged him away.

Report No. 40a

The Parish of Alt-Grottkau, near Grottkau, Upper Silesia⁶³

The parish of Alt-Grottkau included 1,050 Catholics (1942) and 62 persons of other denominations (1929). The church, dedicated to the Holy Trinity, is mentioned in historical records in 1271. The present church was built in the second half of the 13th century. It was rebuilt in 1911 and 1912. Until 1800 Alt-Grottkau was part of the parish of Schwarzengrund (Koppitz).

At seven o'clock in the morning, on February 6th, 1945, the Russians advanced from Grottkau and Schwarzengrund and seized Alt-Grottkau. During the night of February 7th, the vicarage was burnt down. When the inhabitants of Alt-Grottkau who had been evacuated to Lindenau heard that the Russians had left their village (in the course of a counter-attack on February 9th, 1945, the Germans had forced the Russians to retreat as far as Grottkau), some of the men rode back to Alt-Grottkau on bicycles. They discovered that the tabernacle in our church had been forced open, and found the monstrances and chalices lying on the floor of the vestry, damaged and bent... When we returned to Alt-Grottkau on May 14th, 1945, we found it sadly changed. The Russians had wrought havoc. The church was still standing, but the Russian artillery in Grottkau had shelled the church-tower and there was a large hole in it, and the old bell on the north side which was about four hundred years old was now exposed to view. The roof of the church had also been damaged... The ceiling over the high altar had been torn away. Both the hinges on the left door of the tabernacle had been filed through in order to open the tabernacle. The altars were undamaged, but the Russians had used the church as a stable for their horses and the vestry as a kitchen...

... A few of the inhabitants of Alt-Grottkau had remained behind when the rest had been evacuated. Of these, the Russians shot Farmer Joseph Beck — he had refused to leave his sick wife — and Mrs. Helene Valentin, a farmer's wife, and her daughter, Helene. Farmer Max Hiersig was abducted by the Russians and did not return home again until after the Poles had taken over. He was completely emaciated and died a few weeks after his return to Alt-Grottkau. Farmer Paul Reichelt, who had

⁶³ s. *Beitraege*, Vol III, p. 490 ff

also remained behind in Alt-Grottkau, has been missing since the Russian invasion.

A few of the inhabitants of the village of Klein-Neudorf had also remained behind when the rest were evacuated. Farmer Bernhard Seiffert, who had remained behind, was shot by the Russians. He and his mother, a widow, could not be persuaded to leave their farm before the Russians arrived. They had a Ukrainian working for them and he promised them he would protect them against the Russians, but two days after the Russians invaded the village he was sent away by the latter. Mrs. Sorich, Miss Maria Hanke, and Mr. Kernke's housekeeper had also remained behind in Klein-Neudorf. Mr. Kernke's housekeeper sustained a head-injury from a shell-splinter, but despite this fact she was raped by the Russians. She has been missing since the Russians invaded the village.

... On May 28th, some of the inhabitants of Alt-Grottkau, who had remained in the village, returned from Brieg. They had been taken there by the Russians on February 9th. Rudolf Escher, the carpenter, and Farmer Konstantin Jendrzezyk were, however, still missing. They were both abducted by the Russians, and the latter did not return to the village until six months later. Mr. Escher was kept in Russian captivity for two years before the Russians finally released him. He then went to join his family in Western Germany. Mrs. Gertrud Eckert, the farmer's wife, had a very sad fate. On the way to Brieg the Germans were taken through Grottkau. Here Russians tried to rape Mrs. Eckert's fourteen-year old daughter. Mrs. Eckert tried to protect her and was shot dead by the Russians.

... Until the end of July, 1945, the administration was in the hands of the Russians. Looting was relatively rare. On August 1st, however, the Poles took over. At that time there were not many Poles in Alt-Grottkau because the village was so badly damaged. A Polish Communist called Tataara was appointed mayor. Houses were now ransacked and looted and the inhabitants molested in a manner which we had hitherto not experienced. Tataara found a willing helpmate in a Pole of the name of Bielik, who was also a fanatical Bolshevik. These two men, both of whom were given to drink and various other vices, terrorized the whole village.

... On July 18th, 1945, the inhabitants of Grottkau were driven out of their homes by the Poles and taken to the reformatory, where they were forced to lead a miserable existence behind barbed-wire.

... One of the most dreadful acts of vandalism was the desecration of our churchyard in the autumn of 1945. One Sunday the Poles made all the German women in Alt-Grottkau knock all the tombstones down. On this particular Sunday divine service was to be held in the afternoon because the priest was at the camp in Grottkau in the morning. The Poles apparently thought this was a favourable opportunity. As a result of this dreadful act of vandalism about eighty per cent of the tombstones were damaged. Polish youths eagerly participated in the work of destruction...

*Report No. 41***Eichenau, near Grottkau, Upper Silesia**⁶⁴

The community of Eichenau, which belongs to the parish of Ottmachau, included 1,300 Catholics and 44 persons of other denominations (1929). St Andrew's Chapel at Eichenau is mentioned in historical records in 1305. In 1317 Eichenau became part of the parish of Ottmachau, but had a priest of its own. In the 16th century it became an independent parish, but from 1599 onwards it was again part of the parish of Ottmachau. The present church was built during the years 1823 to 1825.

On May 8th, 1945, the Russians occupied Landeck. The combat units marched through the town and things went off fairly quietly until the looting began. On Thursday, May 10th, 1945, Ascension Day, I set off with part of my trek for home. It was a dreadful journey. Many of the people had their bicycles stolen. At dawn we passed through Jauernig. There were no Russians to be seen anywhere and the lovely spring morning inspired us with fresh hope and courage. The most dangerous situation in the course of our trek arose in Ottmachau. Some Russians tried to attack the people in the trek, but I was walking alongside it and managed to ward off the Russians. Very soon, after having survived this danger, we reached our village. It had not been damaged, but the houses were a dreadful sight inside. We were horrified to discover that groups of Russian soldiers were constantly going from house to house, ransacking and looting. My house then became a kind of refuge for women and girls, for the Russians assaulted and raped all the womenfolk they could get hold of. We could hear women screaming and calling for help every night. Russians often came to the house, demanding entrance. On one occasion the situation was extremely dangerous. I suddenly caught sight of six young Russian officers coming across the yard, towards the house. Each of them was armed with a revolver. Before I could reach the door they had forced it open. They pointed their revolvers at me, and, shouting at me in broken German, demanded entrance and asked me to fetch the women and girls who were concealed in my house. I cannot remember how many girls and women there were at the house at that moment, but I obstinately refused to let the Russians enter. Why they did not shoot me for offering resistance, I do not know. Maybe I scared them when I told them that there were some nurses at the house who were looking after someone suffering from typhus. Next morning they returned, accompanied by a Russian army doctor, who asked to see the typhus patient. Needless to say, she saved us, for on the very same day two thousand Russian soldiers arrived in the village and were billeted in all the houses, with the exception of mine, as the Russian doctor had affixed a notice on the door with the words, "Typhus, Entrance Forbidden" on it. Girls and women continued to seek shelter at my house, for conditions in the village were dreadful, particularly at night, when the Russians were drunk and

⁶⁴ s. *Beutraege*, Vol I, p. 282 ff.

seized every woman they set eyes on. The notice remained on my door a long time and, incidentally, saved many of the womenfolk from being raped. Russian soldiers also ransacked the church and stole the monstrance, two valuable vestments, practically all the altar-linen, as well as the albs and surplices. They did not, however, damage the interior of the church.

Strange scenes were often enacted. I shall never forget one incident, when the Russians attempted to force their way into my house in the middle of the night. It was midnight. As there was a lot of noise and commotion in the village I had decided to remain awake and had lain down for a little while, fully clothed. Suddenly I heard voices shouting, "Open the door!" I cautiously opened the window and looked out. There were two Russians standing in front of the door. I hoped they would go away, but instead of doing so their efforts to force their way into the house only became more violent. The women and girls in the house were terrified, and I felt as if I were on the verge of a nervous collapse. The only way I could think of to save us was to lean out of the window and call for help. Hardly had I done so when a brick whizzed past my head. The Russians were now more infuriated than ever, for they realized that their victims had escaped them. Heavy steps could be heard approaching in the distance, whereupon the two Russians hastily disappeared into the darkness of the night. We were saved once more!

One day word went round in the village that police was going to be stationed there. Everyone was most relieved and hoped that conditions would improve. They all assumed that their cattle and household possessions would no longer be stolen, but that they would now enjoy a certain amount of protection and safety. A few days later the "police" actually arrived, namely the Polish militia, and things went from bad to worse.

On July 10th, 1945, as the parishioners of Eichenau were on their way home after having attended mass, they noticed that the main street in the village was full of Polish farm-carts. Some people suddenly came running down the street and told them that the German farmers at the upper end of the village were being driven off their farms by Polish militia. Three militiamen would appear at the farm and say to the farmer, "In five minutes you must be out of here. The house and the land and everything now belongs to a Polish farmer!" Then they would stand there with a watch in their hand, counting the minutes. If the farmer and his family failed to get out of the house by the time the five minutes were up, the Polish militiamen attacked them with cudgels and drove them out of the farmyard. The Polish farmer then moved in and took possession of everything. If the former owner attempted to get any of his possessions out of the house, he was promptly reported to the militia by the Polish farmer. The procedure was the same on every farm. The whole village was in a state of distress and confusion. The German farmers were crowded together in old, broken-down houses. It was touching to see how they helped each other in their need. Old people and children were worst off as there were

hardly any beds available. If anyone attempted to take any bedding with them when they were turned out of the house, the Poles usually snatched it from them. Many of the old people only managed to save a pillow. Nor did the Poles show any consideration whatsoever for large families. Everyone had to be out of the house within five minutes.

One incident upset us all very much. Farmer August Palupski, who was nearly eighty, returned to his house after the five minutes had elapsed in order to get his prayer-book. He managed to get into the house, but was caught by the Polish farmer, who promptly ran to the commanding officer of the militia and reported him. The officer went along to the temporary quarters where Farmer Palupski had found accommodation, seized hold of him, and beat him so savagely with a rubber cudgel that the old man collapsed. Then the officer told him to report to the headquarters of the militia next day. The old man was so terrified of being beaten again next day that he left the village during the night and went to the house of his married daughter in Nowag. From there the Poles took him to the Polish camp at Neisse, where conditions were dreadful. After great suffering, Mr. Palupski was eventually released, broken in spirit and body. He went to Berlin and died there at Christmas, 1945.

Every one of the inhabitants of Eichenau remembers the terrible incident which occurred during the night of December 23rd, 1945. At eleven-fifteen at night someone knocked on the door of my house. I was afraid to open the door and called to the Polish priest, who was staying at the house. He opened the door. There was a patrolman outside. He told us that there was a dead man lying in the street and that the man was probably a German. Seizing a lantern, the Polish priest, the former German mayor, who was also staying at my house, and I hurried out into the street. A dreadful sight met our eyes. A man with a bullet-wound under his left eye was lying there in the street, his face covered with blood. We finally managed to identify him as Paul Kelbel of Eichenau, the German deputy-mayor. He had called on his friend, Alfred Sauer, the farmer, at about seven o'clock in the evening. Sauer's daughter, Gretel, had suddenly appeared in a state of distress with the news that the Poles were looting the house of one of the inhabitants of Eichenau. Looting had been officially forbidden. Mr. Kelbel then ran along to the house in question and called out to the men, who were looting the place and, incidentally, were masked, that he was going to fetch the Polish mayor. He then ran off. A few houses away, at the spot where we found him, someone shot him at close range, for there was a grey ring round the bullet-wound. — We were allowed to bury him, and the Polish authorities assured us that they would try to ascertain who had murdered him, but, of course, this was never done. He must have been murdered at about a quarter past seven in the evening, for he called to see me at six o'clock and brought me a small present, saying he wanted to share it with me. Poor man, may his soul rest in peace!

*Report No. 42***The Parish of Endersdorf, near Grottkau, Upper Silesia ⁶⁵**

The parish of Endersdorf included 510 Catholics (1942) and 38 persons of other denominations (1929). The parish-church, dedicated to St Simon and St Jude, is mentioned in historical records in 1391. The present church was probably built during the years 1724 to 1730. The vestry was built in 1906. As early as 1579 Endersdorf was already part of the parish of Grottkau. In 1866 it became a separate community with a priest of its own, and on June 30, 1873, it became a curacy. The parish was founded on April 19th, 1893.

About seven of the villagers who remained in Endersdorf were killed when the Russians seized the village. Two old people were shot, one of them a woman, who was brutally murdered, the other an old farmer whom the Russians arrested and shot as a spy. Two other persons were shot whilst trying to escape out of the house, and two persons are missing. The oldest inhabitant of the village, Mrs. Auguste Weniger, who was nearly ninety and lived all alone, probably died of starvation... Neither the church, the vicarage nor the castle were damaged.

Women and girls were constantly in danger of being assaulted by drunken Russians. On numerous occasions they hid in the cornfields at night, and so avoided being molested and raped by the Russians.

At the end of June, 1945, the Poles took over. A time of dreadful suffering and hardship, worse than anything we had ever imagined, now began for the population of the village, in fact, of all Silesia. Indeed, the sufferings of the Germans in Silesia are not yet ended. The Poles have treated Silesia and the Silesians a thousand times worse than ever any German, even the members of the Nazi SS units, treated the Poles. This was the way the Poles used to behave when they arrived in our villages. Seven or ten or even twelve lorries, bearing Polish markings, would suddenly appear in the village. On each lorry there would be a crowd of Polish families and two or three Polish militiamen. The lorries would stop in the middle of the village and the militiamen would then assign various houses and farms to the Polish families. The German families living there would be forced to leave within twenty or thirty minutes' time and would not even be allowed to take their possessions with them. We took most of the inhabitants of our village in on the estate and gave them temporary accommodation in the various farm-buildings. The people who were turned out of their homes were not allowed to take anything of any value with them. As a rule they were forced to hand over things like bedding, suits of clothes, which were still in good condition, boots, and food to the Poles. When the Poles had finished expelling the Germans in neighbouring villages they would drive through Endersdorf on the way back. They would then stop and raid the farms still occupied by Germans. They would steal anything they could lay hands on, — clothes, linen, shoes, meat, flour, bedding — and usually maltreated the German

⁶⁵ s. *Beitraege*, Vol II, p. 648

women, by hitting them in the face. At a given signal they would jump onto their lorries again and would drive off to Oppeln. The same scene was enacted in the various villages of the district again and again until the whole area was finally occupied by Poles in July and August. About one hundred and eighty Poles settled in Endersdorf, and the four to five thousand Germans living there now became the slaves of the Poles. Very few of the Polish families had brought cows or horses or any cattle at all with them. Most of the cattle belonging to the Germans had been stolen by the Russians, and what little was left was now seized by the Poles. The German mayor was dismissed, a Pole appointed in his stead, and the Germans forced to submit to his rule. Soon after he had been appointed the Polish mayor gathered a group of Polish supporters, and together they used to raid the houses of Germans, who had not yet been expelled, and steal whatever they could lay hands on, especially food, such as chickens, geese, turkeys, rabbits, meat, bacon, or preserves. They would remove pieces of furniture from the German houses, such as sewing-machines, sideboards, wardrobes, and beds, and would then furnish their newly-acquired houses with them. The Polish mayor, a youngish fellow, was the ringleader of this rabble and outdid all the others as far as brutality was concerned. The Germans were not allowed a moment's peace. Very often they would return home from working in the fields to find that they had either been turned out of the house in the meantime and now only possessed the tattered clothes they had worn to work, or to discover that the house had been ransacked and their clothing, linen, and shoes stolen. Children and grown-ups were very often robbed of their best clothes in this manner. Day after day the Poles would raid the houses and steal the things that the inhabitants had managed to save and bring back with them, when they returned to the village after the Russian invasion. Those Germans who ventured to defend themselves and their property ran the risk of being mishandled and beaten. German farmers were even held to blame for any damage which might have been done to agricultural machines and implements during their absence from the village during the war, the Poles affirming that such damage was an act of sabotage on the part of the Germans against the Poles. The Poles even turned out Germans who were seriously ill and confined to bed. All such incidents recurred again and again when a Polish militia unit and the Polish secret police moved into the castle at Endersdorf. Nor did matters improve when the Polish sheriff or chief mayor established his headquarters at the castle. He and the deputy mayor seized the largest farms in the village; they had the best horses and the best cows in their stables. Their methods were, in fact, no better than those of the militia, who stole fruit off the trees and seized all the grain supplies. The Germans received no share whatsoever of their own produce. They were forced to buy flour, meat, milk, and bread, which were sold to them with considerable reluctance by the Polish tradesmen and bakers, and then only at exorbitant prices. Goods had to be paid for in Polish money and most of the Germans had none...

*Report No. 43***The Parish of Friedewalde, near Grottkau, Upper Silesia ⁶⁶**

The parish of Friedewalde included 1,478 Catholics (1942) and 33 persons of other denominations (1929). The church (St Hedwig's) is mentioned in historical records at the beginning of the 14th century. An annex was added to the present church in 1738 and the tower was built in 1746. Until 1810 Friedewalde belonged to the primates of Breslau. The neighbouring community of Gross-Briesen numbered 501 Catholics and 9 persons of other denominations (1929). The church in Gross-Briesen (St. Martin's) is likewise mentioned in historical records as early as the beginning of the 14th century.

On May 18th, 1945, we ventured to return home and arrived in Struwendorf, near Neisse, on May 19th, Whit Saturday. The farm and the buildings belonging to my brother had not suffered much damage. They had, however, been ransacked, and all the rooms, cellars, and stables were in a dreadful state. On Whit Sunday I said mass in Mogwitz as the parish-church in Boesdorf had been ransacked and damaged by the Russians. When I got back to my brother's farm there were thirty to forty Poles ransacking and looting the place. They seized hold of the carts containing our possessions, which we had not had time to unload, and removed all articles of clothing, linen, valuables, food, and even our last supply of bread. All I had left by the time they had finished was an ordinary grey suit and a few underclothes. The Poles also robbed me of several thousand marks in cash, namely the church funds which I had had in my keeping, and even took what money I had of my own. I was now a pauper. I shall never forget Whit Sunday, 1945! On May 29th, I finally returned to Friedewalde as a large number of the inhabitants had already returned there. The church had been damaged very badly, probably at the end of March when the Russians attacked the village a second time. I was horrified when I saw the extent of the damage. I assume that much of the damage inside the church was done wilfully. The vestments were lying scattered about on the vestry floor, the sacred linen had all been stolen with the exception of a few smaller things like chalice covers, which were scattered here and there on the dirty floor. Most of the servers' robes had been cut to pieces and all the copes were missing. A number of floor-boards in the vestry had also been taken up.

The church in Gross-Briesen was destroyed by fire. An old farmer of eighty-two, who had remained in the village when the Russians occupied it, told me that the church-tower had been damaged by shells and that the Russians set fire to the church on May 1st, 1945. The valuable frescoes which were discovered when the church was renovated in 1938 were also destroyed when the church burnt down. The community of Gross-Briesen, numbering 470 inhabitants, suffered dreadfully. Twenty-six barns were destroyed by fire and most of the houses were very badly damaged. The damage was then temporarily repaired as quickly as

⁶⁶ s *Beitraege*, Vol II, p 659, 660

possible as the inhabitants had nowhere else to live. In order to enable the members of the community to attend divine service, two rooms were set aside at the inn, which was also badly damaged by shells, and every Sunday and at least once during the week services were held there.

Religious services were also held in the village of Winzenberg, which at that time had no priest of its own. The vicar had to go all these long distances on foot, as the Poles had stolen his bicycle and the farmers did not venture to drive across country, as the Russians would often stop them and take their horses from them. From June 1st, 1945, until March 8th, 1946, religious services were held in Friedewalde, Gross - Briesen, and Eckwertsheide every Sunday.

In June, 1945, crowds of Poles arrived in the village. A time of dreadful suffering and terrorization now began for the inhabitants of the village. The Poles very soon began to lord it over the Germans. The latter were forced to leave their houses and move into tiny quarters. They were constantly subjected to maltreatment on the part of the Poles, who beat them and often imprisoned them. In addition, Russian soldiers who happened to pass through the village robbed them of their possessions and assaulted and raped the women and girls. The Poles stole anything they took a fancy to. They deprived the Germans of their cattle, their horses and oxen, and even their hens. The Germans were not allowed to have any possessions or property of their own. If they required anything they had to ask the Poles for permission. As most Poles are by nature lazy they made the Germans work for them, and very often the work they were forced to do was completely futile. All the corn and wheat had to be collected and put into large sheds. In the autumn the Russians came and made the Germans thresh it. Part of the grain was then distributed to the Poles, whilst the Germans received hardly any at all. Very soon there was a serious shortage of bread. The Poles and Russians made the Germans grind the grain until it was very fine, so that they could eat white bread, whilst the Germans were only allowed the very coarsest kind. Liquor was distilled from old potatoes at the brewery. Practically every Pole had his own secret distillery despite the fact that it was forbidden. They also used to distil liquor from sugar-beet and from rye.

Any German who ventured to offer the least resistance to the Poles was severely punished. I know of cases where women who were standing in the street were beaten and kicked for no reason at all. The Poles would often hit German women in the face and call them obscene names. The Polish militiamen were for the most part insolent, brutal, and unjust. There were, of course, a few Poles among them who were sensible in the way they acted, and who treated the Germans in a friendly manner and even gave them food, but most of them did not care in the least whether the Germans starved to death or not.

*Report No. 44***The Parish of Giersdorf, near Grottkau, Upper Silesia**⁶⁷

The parish of Giersdorf included 1,750 Catholics (1942) and 2,263 persons of other denominations (1929). The church (St Martin's) is mentioned in historical records in 1372. The present church was built in 1688. The south transept dates from the year 1608. The tower was built in 1843.

The only way the war of 1939 to 1945 made itself felt in our village was by the casualty lists which were constantly being published. Including those reported as missing, there were ninety casualties, which was a comparatively large number for a small village like ours.

On January 20th, 1945, the first lot of refugees from towns and villages on the right bank of the River Oder arrived in Giersdorf. We also had to provide billets for the first units of retreating German troops. On January 22nd, we were warned to leave the village and a large number of the inhabitants departed. The Russians had reached the River Oder. We could hear the rumble of cannon in the distance, over towards Brieg. The train-service had ceased to operate and we had no electric light. Day and night refugees passed through the village. On February 4th, the Russians crossed the Oder and advanced as far as Grottkau. I had intended going to Grottkau, but abandoned the idea as the town was said to be on fire and all the streets and roads were blocked with retreating German soldiers. At night there was a red glow in the sky from the fires on the farms in the neighbouring districts. The fighting front was now quite close to us, between Voigtsdorf and Grottkau (about two and a half miles away as the crow flies). I stayed in Giersdorf. Up till March 15th, we were involved in all the activities connected with a main fighting zone, — billeting, air-raids, shelling, etc., but there was hardly any damage done in the village. The church was still undamaged, despite the fact that it was situated on a hill and in the direct line of fire.

On March 15th, 1945, a large-scale attack was launched. The cannon thundered close by as our vicar said mass in the church for the last time. At noon Russian tanks drove into the farmyard. Thanks to a German counter-attack that same evening, my family and I were able to get away, unobserved by the Russians.

We remained in Bohemia until the end of May. At the beginning of June, I returned to Giersdorf after a most exhausting and strenuous journey. When I got there I found that the church no longer had either a roof or a tower. The vicarage roof had also been damaged and the interior of the house was a dreadful sight. The rooms downstairs had been used as stables. The books out of the library had been flung on to the dung-heap. The roof of the outbuildings had also been damaged very badly.

Little damage had been done to the altars in the church. The altar of the Holy Virgin was unharmed and so, too, was my picture of the Ma-

⁶⁷ Separate report of April 1952

donna, the only one of all the pictures that had not been damaged. The Russian soldiers do apparently still feel some awe in the presence of the Holy Mother. Most of the servers' robes and the sacred linen were in tatters. The monstrance had vanished and so, too, had most of the chalices and ciboriums. The sacramental wine, which had been carefully hidden away before the Russians arrived, had also disappeared. In the tabernacle which was open, I did, however, find a chalice which I had not placed there. The Holy Virgin must have guarded it for us. As there was only a little sacramental wine and a limited number of holy wafers available, services were at first only held on Sundays. After a while, however, thanks to the help of fellow-priests, we were able to hold services regularly, as we had previously done. The most acute problem was the shortage of food. Our need was very great. No food — and I had eight persons to feed! In the course of time the heaps of ruins in the village were cleared away, and the church received a provisional roof, made of straw! The inhabitants of the village suffered dreadfully at the hands of the Russians and the Poles. As Giersdorf was so badly damaged it was not until 1946 that the first Polish settlers moved into the village. Giersdorf was therefore regarded as a German village in Upper Silesia and treated accordingly. Day after day cases of looting, raping, and other atrocities occurred. Such methods of tormenting the villagers were the order of the day, until eventually the inhabitants of Giersdorf decided to leave in stealth for the west. The Poles had no intention of expelling the people of Giersdorf and sending them to Germany, but wanted to keep them in the village as their slaves. Owing to the fact that the inhabitants of Giersdorf left the village on their own initiative, the community is now very much scattered. Some of its members are living in the Eastern Zone in the Meissen-Dresden district, others have found refuge in Lower Saxony and Westphalia, and some are scattered all over the Federal Republic of Germany.

There is just one more incident I should like to mention in connection with the Poles. They actually broke the rear wall of the high altar away in the hopes of finding some treasures concealed there. Not even the Russians went to such lengths.

Report No. 45

The Parish of Lindenau, near Grottkau, Upper Silesia ⁶⁸

The parish of Lindenau included 1,123 Catholics (1942) and 39 persons of other denominations (1929). The church (St Martin's) is mentioned in historical records between the years 1289 and 1300. The present church was built in the baroque style, probably in 1775. Until 1810 Lindenau belonged to the primates of Breslau.

The fighting front came to a halt at Seiffersdorf, about five miles away from Lindenau. Lindenau, like the other villages in the neighbouring districts, was surrendered to the enemy without any fighting, on

⁶⁸ s. *Beitraege*, Vol II, p 673 ff

May 7th, 1945, and thus suffered no damage. Both the church and the vicarage were undamaged.

... As soon as the Poles took over they began to terrorize the population. The Polish militia behaved in an atrocious manner. Many of the Germans were arrested and sent to the camp at Grottkau; many were also taken to Muehlrain, where they were very badly treated. Looting by the militia was the order of the day. The sight of Polish militia approaching one's house was enough to set one trembling with fear. Indeed, they were feared even more than the Russians.

... One day Polish militia suddenly appeared at the house and told us all to report at the convent with our luggage within half an hour's time. Thereupon one of the militiamen seized hold of everything that appeared to have any value and shouted, "Get out! Get out!" The possessions that we had acquired in the course of twenty years' hard work were snatched from us in a couple of minutes. There were heart-rending scenes at the convent. Polish militia and other rabble had rounded up the poor Germans living in the village and neighbouring hamlets, and had brought them along to the convent. There the Poles now began to check up on each family, who had to line up in turn, leaving their luggage and possessions in the convent-yard. Then all the men and women had to file into the building separately and were searched, the Poles depriving them of any valuables they had on them and in some cases even of their money and their savings account-books. The luggage in the yard had meanwhile also been searched, anything of value had been removed, and placed in a heap on one side of the yard. The families who had been "relieved" of their possessions in this way now had to line up in the garden which resembled a slave-market, the Russians and Poles selecting people who were to work for them. The Russians picked out seventy-five persons for work on the kolchoses, choosing young girls, in particular, and about twenty men and boys. The Poles then selected about fifty persons. The people who had been chosen for work on the kolchoses had to line up and were then marched off. All the rest were allowed to return to their homes, but on doing so many of them found that the Poles had in the meantime seized their houses, and they were forced to go from house to house, begging for temporary accommodation. Most of them were persons who were old and sick or women with small children...

Report No. 46

The Parish of Ottmachau, near Grottkau, Upper Silesia⁶⁹

The parish of Ottmachau included 8,300 Catholics (1942) and 599 persons of other denominations (1929). It is most probable that there was a chapel in Ottmachau as early as 1155 when the castle and adjoining land belonged to the diocese of Breslau. A church, St John's, is mentioned in historical records in 1235, whilst a church dedicated to

⁶⁹ s *Beitraege*, Vol II, p 750 ff

St Nicholas is mentioned in 1285. In connection with the latter a theological college was founded in 1386, which was transferred to Neisse in 1477. The present church, dedicated to St Nicholas and Francis Xavier, was built during the years 1690 to 1693 in the baroque style. Until 1810 Ottmachau belonged to the theological college at Neisse. The church of St Anne's, mentioned in 1414, was destroyed by the Hussites, but was rebuilt in 1441. The bishop's castle at Ottmachau was secularized in 1810.

The first heavy air-raid on Ottmachau (the large Neisse reservoir is situated nearby) occurred on March 15th, 1945, at nine-thirty. Three bombs came down in the vicarage garden and one close to the church. The roof of the church, the roof of the vicarage, and the precentor's house were badly damaged. From March 15th, onwards Ottmachau was in the fighting zone and air-raids occurred every day. During the night of March 18th, the town was then evacuated completely. During the month of April about half the town was destroyed by air-raids. The church was hit by bombs three times, one of them crashing through the roof into the side-aisle. The vicar was one of the first persons to return to Ottmachau after the war was over. The first service was held at Whitsuntide, 1945.

... The Polish Occupation was in some respects even more nerve-racking than the Russian Occupation had been. The number of robbers and bandits increased from day to day. The so-called Housing Department assigned dwellings belonging to Germans to the Poles who decided to settle in Ottmachau. The Germans were crowded together in cellars, attics, and back-yards. With the exception of those who worked at the sugar factory, all Germans had to work for ten hours a day without receiving any pay. From the middle of September, 1945, until the end of May, 1946, the inhabitants had to clear away the ruins. On Sundays they used to go to the neighbouring villages and beg for food, and during the week the children used to go to the Poles and beg. It was a regular thing for Poles to beat Germans, in particular persons who lived all alone and sought to protect their possessions from being seized and taken away by the Poles. Many of the men were sent to the concentration camp at Grottkau, where they were treated most brutally and inhumanly. Some of them have not returned to this day. All the inhabitants of the village of Klein-Mahlendorf were taken to the camp at Grottkau. Several of them died as a result of the ill-treatment they received and also of physical exhaustion. The number of deaths in 1945 amounted to 175, despite the fact that only one-third of the population had returned to Ottmachau. In normal times the average death-rate per year had been about 110 to 115. Most of the deaths were due to typhus. One woman was killed when a damaged building collapsed. The Poles made the Germans go on with the job of clearing away ruins even during storms. The Germans were made to suffer not only during the day but also at night, when Polish hordes used to raid and loot the houses...

*Report No. 47***The Parish of Ottmachau, near Grottkau, Upper Silesia**⁷⁰

A native of Eichenau, Mr. Bernhard N., who lived in Ottmachau, related his dreadful experiences to me. He had been a prominent member of the Catholic Youth Group in Eichenau, but had never been a member of the National Socialist Party. Soon after the Poles took over they made him work in the municipal council-offices in Ottmachau. After a while the Poles decided to use him as a police-spy, and one evening he was told to go along to the headquarters of the Polish militia. When he got there he was questioned about the vicars of Ottmachau and Eichenau, as to what remarks they had made about the Poles and as to where they might have hidden valuable possessions, etc. The Poles then asked him to give them information about certain persons and also to state the names of persons who had been members of the National Socialist Party. Their names were known to the Poles, in any case, and the persons in question had already been taken to the various camps and were being tortured there. When N. refused to comply with the Poles' request they made him strip and took him down into the cellar, where they forced him to stand in cold water up to his ankles for half an hour. Incidentally, this happened in winter, in January, 1946. After half an hour they took him up to the overheated room in which he had first been interrogated. Here they once more repeated their request, and Mr. N. again refused to comply. Thereupon they beat him until his old war-wound burst open. As he still refused to make a statement, they then held him down on a bench and belaboured his naked body from top to toe with rubber cudgels. After this they took him down to the cellar again and forced him to stand in cold water once more. When they finally brought him back to the interrogation-room they tried a different method. He was told he could put his clothes on, and they gave him something to eat and offered him a cigarette. Mr. N., however, refused to accept. Thereupon they told him that he was to sign a statement to the effect that he was willing to be a police-spy for the Polish secret police. He again refused, whereupon one of the Poles took hold of his hand, thrust a pencil in it and forced it onto the paper in front of him till there was a kind of signature on it. Then they informed him that he was now one of them and should come back to headquarters on some day that they would name and give them all the information he could about the attitude of the Germans. Finally, they told him that if he refused to comply with this request he would be treated even worse than on this occasion. Mr. N. told me that he reeled home that night in great pain, as his body was black and blue and swollen all over after the way the Poles had treated him. About two days later he fled from Ottmachau, under cover of darkness, with his wife and his aunt.

⁷⁰ s. *Beitraege*, Vol I, p. 289

*Report No. 48***The Parish of Steinhaus (Kamnig), near Grottkau, Upper Silesia ⁷¹**

The parish of Steinhaus (Kamnig) included 1,230 Catholics (1942) and 51 persons of other denominations (1929). The church (St Andrew's) is mentioned in historical records at the beginning of the 14th century. The present church was built in 1794, the tower in 1856. Until 1810 Steinhaus belonged to the primates of Breslau.

Mrs. St. of Kamnig related the following. "On June 14th, the Poles arrived in Kamnig. My husband, who had become a member of the National Socialist Party in 1939, was arrested by the Polish militia. One of the inhabitants told the Poles where we lived and persuaded them to arrest my husband instead of him. My husband was then taken away to the camp at Grottkau. Before the Poles set off with him they hit him with their cudgels and beat him and forced him to take his boots off. The people who had been arrested then had to push the militia-men's bicycles as far as Tscheschdorf and had to sing hymns and Hitler songs as they trudged along. In Tscheschdorf the Poles forced one of the Germans who had been arrested to beat the rest and then gave him a piece of bread and lard for doing so. At the camp in Grottkau the prisoners were very often taken down into the cellar and beaten up. They were made to work, either clearing away debris, building bridges, or repairing the railway-lines, etc. On the way to work they were marched through the town and made to sing "Holy Lord, we praise Thee" or "Nazi songs".

Mrs. St. later fled to relatives in Neuwaltersdorf, near Habelschwerdt, in October and again in January, 1946, because she was terrified of the Poles who took five hundred of the inhabitants of Kamnig, including young women and girls, most of them without shoes and stockings, away on lorries to some unknown destination. According to information received later, these people were all taken to the camp at Auschwitz.

The Poles deprived us of everything. The only things we managed to save were the clothes we were wearing. Their behaviour towards us Catholic priests and even to those of us who, like myself, held services in Polish for them, was utterly abominable. Incidentally, there were a lot of Poles from Lublin in my parish, most of them rabble, thieves and murderers. The vicarage, which was seized by Polish militia in October and turned into militia headquarters, became a veritable chamber of torture in which scores of decent women and girls were brutally raped and ill-treated and robbed every day. Day after day houses and farms belonging to Germans were raided and looted and the occupants turned out. Three women, all of whom had small children, were shot by the militia. Thefts were constantly being committed in the church, and chalices, monstrances, vestments, and linen were stolen. The tabernacle was broken open several times. Polish militia wrought havoc in the vicarage-grounds. They felled all the trees on the vicarage-farm, and

⁷¹ s *Beitraege*, Vol II, p 532

stole all the cattle, furniture, food, and fuel at the farm and the vicarage. Shots were constantly being fired in the church during the services, and it is a miracle that I was not killed as the bullets whizzed past me as I stood at the altar. All my identity papers and personal documents were stolen. And this is only a very small fraction of all the crimes committed against the Germans by the Poles.⁷²

Report No. 49

Neisse, Upper Silesia⁷³

The Union of the Catholic Communities of Neisse, the ancient episcopal see, consists of three parishes and two curacies, numbering 36,300 Catholics (1942) and 4,894 persons of other denominations (1929). A parish-church (St Jacob's) existed as early as 1223 and is mentioned in historical records in 1267. The present church of St Jacob's was built in the years 1424 to 1430 in the Gothic style. Extensive renovations were carried out in the years 1677 to 1679, 1889 to 1895, and finally in 1940. From 1650 onwards the church was connected with the theological college founded in Ottmachau in 1386 and transferred to Neisse in 1477, which was secularized in 1810. The church contains the tombs of numerous bishops. Until 1810 Neisse and the principality of the same name belonged to the primates of Breslau. The bishop's palace was later used as a county-court, whilst the farm belonging to the palace was used to house troops and as a supply depot. — The Jesuit college founded in 1623 as part of the monastery of the Order of Crusaders was rebuilt in 1668 and the following years, whilst the Jesuit church, dedicated to the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, was rebuilt during the years 1688 to 1692. Until 1848 the college was conducted by Jesuits. From then onwards it was a state grammar-school for Catholics.

The parish-church of St Dominic's was built by Dominican friars who settled in Friedrichsstadt, Neisse. It was begun in 1748 and completed in 1788. In 1810 the church and monastery were secularized. To begin with, the church was administered by St Jacob's. The parish of St Dominic's was founded on December 19th, 1914. The priests' chapel in the parish was built in 1659 by the Capuchins.

The Church of the Holy Cross (dedicated to St Peter and St Paul) was built during the years 1719 to 1730 in the baroque style by the monks of the Order of the Crusaders. According to historical records this Order already existed in Neisse as early as 1226. From 1819 onwards the old monastery of the Order, which, together with the church, was rebuilt in 1434, after having been destroyed by the Hussites, was the primates' pensioners' home.

Priests relate their experiences in Silesia

On March 24th, 1945, the day before Palm Sunday, the Russians invaded Neisse, a town in Upper Silesia with a population of approximately 40,000. About twenty clergymen and lay-brothers, two hundred nuns, who were tending the aged and sick, and about two thousand civilians had remained behind in the town. Despite the fact that Neisse was besieged and bombarded for a week, most of the buildings were not damaged. Of all the

⁷² s. *Beitraege*, Vol II, p 774

⁷³ s. *Beitraege*, Vol. I, p 340 ff

buildings of historical value in Neisse, the famous church of St. Jacob's was the only one that was damaged. On the afternoon of March 21 st, it caught fire after the Russians had shelled it. The Red Army now surged into the town. Russian soldiers raided the priests' house and immediately robbed the priests, nuns, and other persons sheltering there of their watches and other valuables. Threatening us with their rifles, they demanded wine, and went from room to room, looting and stealing. They even damaged the altar which we had set up in the cellar and where we had celebrated mass a short time previously, and removed the monstrances and chalices. The girls, women, and nuns were raped incessantly for hours on end, the soldiers standing in queues, the officers at the head of the queues, in front of their victims. During the first night many of the nuns and women were raped as many as fifty times. Some of the nuns who resisted with all their strength were shot, others were ill-treated in a dreadful manner until they were too exhausted to offer any resistance. The Russians knocked them down, kicked them, beat them on the head and in the face with the butt-end of their revolvers and rifles, until they finally collapsed and in this unconscious condition became the helpless victims of brutish passion, which was so inhuman as to be inconceivable. The same dreadful scenes were enacted in the hospitals, homes for the aged, and other such institutions. Even nuns who were seventy and eighty years old and were ill and bedridden were raped and ill-treated by these barbarians. And to make matters even worse, these atrocities were not committed secretly or in hidden corners but in public, in churches, on the streets, and on the squares, and the victims were nuns, women, and even eight-year old children. Mothers were raped in the presence of their children, girls were raped in front of their brothers, and nuns were raped in front of young boys. The Russians even went so far as to rape their victims when they were already dead. Priests who tried to protect the nuns were brutally dragged away, the Russians threatening to shoot them.

On the afternoon of the day the Russians seized the town they raided all the houses, in order to round up all the inhabitants who had remained behind and so as to have a free hand as far as ransacking, looting, and other atrocities were concerned. Girls, young women, and nuns were seized as victims for these atrocities. When we priests were led out of the town at night, together with the rest of the inhabitants who had been rounded up, a dreadful sight met our eyes. The whole town was on fire, rows and rows of houses and streets. The fires had started in the cellars, a sure indication that they had been laid intentionally, as, in fact, we later heard from eyewitnesses. The Russians also set fire in this way to a large home for the aged, run by Catholic nuns, and almost all the inmates perished in the flames. About eighty per cent of the many buildings of historical value in Neisse, which for this reason was always called the Rome of Silesia, were destroyed by fire.

We had no idea where the Russians were taking us the night they rounded us up and made us leave Neisse. After we had trudged along for some time we finally stopped in a small village, where we were all

crowded into a small room, which was so tiny that we could neither sit down nor lie down. Next day all the priests were interrogated separately by an officer of the OGPU. He was a lecturer in Leninism at the University of Leningrad, and tried to win us over for propaganda work for the Red Army. He promised us large churches of our own and influential positions if we would agree to his suggestion. Needless to say, he himself was so lacking in education and culture that he asked us whether the Pope was Catholic or Protestant. After we had been interrogated as to our activities during the past ten years, we were relegated to the rear areas of the fighting zone. The Russians refused to give us any identity papers or military protection on this journey, so we were completely at the mercy of any Russian soldiers we might encounter. We were constantly in danger of being taken to a penal camp. In the course of our journey we were interrogated by the Russians again and again and very often beaten.

All the villages we passed through bore evidence of having been ransacked and ravaged by the Russians. In the churches the tabernacles had been damaged, statues and pictures smashed, altars knocked over, poor-boxes prised open, and parts of sacred vessels and vestments scattered on the floor. Some of the churches, and the houses, too, had been used as stables. The villages were deserted save for women and girls, whom the Russians had not allowed to leave but kept there to work for them. These girls and women were subjected to dreadful treatment and atrocities. We usually looked for some kind of accommodation in these deserted villages and lived on the meagre food supplies we found in the ruined houses.

We spent nine weeks in this state of insecurity. Finally, after the armistice, we were allowed to return to Neisse. We heard a lot of reports about the town on our way back, but our worst fears were realized when we saw Neisse. Most of the buildings had been gutted by fire and the town was dead and deserted. We were the first priests to return, and our first task was to bury the bodies of the nuns who had been assaulted by the Russians. Their number had in the meantime increased to thirty. The abbot of the Franciscan monastery nearby⁷⁴ and five of the lay-brothers had been murdered.

After a time those who had fled began to return to the town in the hopes of being allowed to work in peace and make a new livelihood. As most of them found their homes in ruins they tried to find accommodation in the outlying districts. But here, too, they had to clear away ruins and debris before they could find somewhere to live. And the houses that were undamaged were in a state of utter confusion and disorder, and smashed furniture, left-over food, linen, household utensils, books, corpses, feather-beds that had been slit, animals' entrails, flour, etc. were scattered all over the rooms. In order to enable the people to attend divine service again after all these weeks, we set about clearing up the

⁷⁴ Neisse-Rochus. Before the Russian invasion there were 16 monks and 41 lay-brothers at the monastery. A short description of the murder of the six Franciscans is given on p. 107 of the book, *The Martyrdom of Silesian Priests*. A detailed description is contained in Vol. IV, "Schlesische Ordenschronik" of the *Beitraege*, pp. 27—37.

churches which were in a similar state to the houses. But all these tasks were rendered well-nigh impossible as the Russian soldiers continued to behave in the same way as they had done during the war. Day and night they ransacked and looted houses and churches, and raped the women-folk, thus terrorizing the entire population. They even murdered nuns, and set fire to houses that had not been destroyed previously. Monasteries, convents, and vicarages in districts which had not been affected by the war were ransacked and looted, grain supplies confiscated, and the cattle stolen.

A new period of suffering began when the Poles took over the country from the Russians. Although there was at first no Polish population in the district, religious services in German were immediately prohibited. The gospel was no longer to be preached in German and the people were no longer allowed to pray or sing their hymns in their own language. In Neisse we tried to find some sort of a compromise in order to meet all requirements as regards services in Polish and the preaching of the gospel in this language. In the country-churches, however, divine service was conducted in silence, since there was very often no one in the village, with the exception of the Polish militia, who could speak Polish. The Polish militia had assumed the role of the Gestapo or Russian OGPU, and robbed the Germans who returned to their native villages of the possessions they had managed to save and were now bringing back with them. It was an arbitrary organization, led by Communists, and it carried out the expulsion and deportation of the German population, which consisted mainly of women, children, and old persons, in a most brutal manner.

From July, 1945, onwards the rural population of the villages near Neisse was driven out of their houses and farms, as was elsewhere the case, too, within a couple of minutes. They were driven along to the camps like cattle, beaten, and robbed of the few possessions and the little food they had managed to snatch up before they had been forced to leave their homes. They were crowded together in sheds at the camps; very often they had to spend whole days and nights in the open, in the heat and the rain, and were subjected to starvation. Invalids, small children, and old persons usually died soon after being taken to the camps, as a result of these inhuman measures on the part of the militia. Occasionally the internees would be released from the camps, completely exhausted, ill and emaciated, and would be thrust into cattle-trucks, without receiving any food-rations, and taken westwards. In most of the towns the Germans were thrust into ghettos. There, twenty of them or even more were crowded together in one room from which all the furniture and fittings had been previously removed. They had no food, no heating, no light, no medical attention, and very often not even the most necessary articles of clothing. People suffering from typhus were thrown out of their beds in the middle of the night, driven out onto the street, and left lying there.

All the German men whom the Poles managed to get hold of in the course of these roundups were promptly separated from their families

and taken to special camps. These men, who had never been members of the National Socialist Party but were for the most part devout Catholics and had, in many cases, been deprived of their positions during the Nazi regime and been made to suffer because they had steadfastly refused to change their attitude, and who for this reason had believed themselves to be safe under the Polish regime, were now tortured to death in a manner that is inconceivable. The Poles cut swastikas into their flesh with knives and bayonets, and poured buckets of water over those who fainted in order to torture them even more. Young Germans, who had been prisoners-of-war and had been released and, unsuspectingly, now returned home from the British or American zone to look for their families were treated in the same way. A Catholic priest, for instance, who was a South American national, was tortured and beaten for a whole night in a prison cell and would probably have been killed, had not someone intervened on his behalf and pointed out that he was an American.

Russians, Communists, and Poles thus tortured the German population, and that was as far as their concern for the welfare of the country went. Instead of seeing to it that the most essential foodstuffs were made available, they robbed the people of the little they had, requisitioned the meagre harvest, and the cattle, and condemned the people to starvation. Poles and Russians raided the gardens, plucked the fruit from the trees and bushes before it was ripe, and stole the vegetables. The Germans were not even allowed to go out into the fields and glean the corn to appease their hunger. They lived on potatoes which they gathered in the fields under cover of darkness. If they were caught in the fields they were promptly taken along to the former Party headquarters and were beaten until they fainted, or, as was often the case, until they went out of their minds. Ration cards were later introduced, but were only issued to Germans who worked for the Poles. The only rations to be had on these cards were bread and salt, but actually most of the Germans never received anything at all. The Poles were always served first in the few shops that existed and so there was never anything left over for the Germans. As a result of all this an epidemic of typhus broke out, and not only most of the smaller children and old persons but also many who had been fairly strong died of this disease. The death-rate was ten times higher than it had been during the years before the war...

Those who crossed the frontier into Western Germany sighed with relief when they reached the other side. However great material losses may have been, the dreadful fate of Silesia is even more depressing. Silesia, and in particular Upper Silesia, is a land of slavery ruled by creatures who are governed by the lowest instincts and prompted by brutal feelings of hate and revenge. The Germans in Silesia are at the mercy of unscrupulous and ruthless Bolshevik tyrants to whom nothing is sacred.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ Cf also pastoral messages to the members of the parish of St Dominic's, Neisse, St. Jacob's, Neisse, and Neisse-Neuland

*Report No. 50*Neisse, Upper Silesia ⁷⁶*The Expulsion of the Germans from Neisse*

About the middle of June, 1945, the Poles began to expel the Germans from Neisse and the surrounding districts. Those who give this account of what occurred happened to be the guests of priests in some of the villages concerned at the time. The villages were suddenly surrounded by Polish militiamen, who, armed with rubber cudgels, then went into all the houses and drove the occupants out. The latter were only allowed a few minutes in which to collect a few of their possessions. Priests, too, were driven out of their houses in the same manner. In some cases they managed to save the holy wafers in the tabernacles and take them with them. In the course of these expulsions the German population was treated in a most abominable manner. Those who ventured to object were beaten unmercifully. They were forced to trudge to the nearest town where they were then crowded into camps. Here they were forced to remain for four weeks or even longer before they were finally conveyed in cattle-trucks to the west. The camps were in a filthy condition and the people were crowded together in small sheds so that they hardly had room to stir.

The casemates at Neisse-Friedrichstadt had formerly been used to house a hundred prisoners-of-war, but now there were as many as two thousand Germans crowded together there. A large number of them had to remain out in the open. When the Poles expelled the Germans from Silesia they even rounded up people suffering from typhus, threw them onto lorries, as for instance in Reinschdorf near Neisse, and then put them together with other healthy persons at the camps. The internees received no food for weeks on end; the only thing they were allowed was water. Many of them died when the meagre food supplies they had brought with them were exhausted. Thanks to a few of the guards who were more humane than the rest, priests were allowed to take food to the inmates of some of the camps. It was heart-breaking to see the way the internees would hurl themselves upon the small supplies that they received in this way.

Despite the fact that a petition was sent to the Polish administrative head of the district, the priests were not allowed to administer the last sacrament to those of the internees who lay dying. But even the Polish militia considered this measure a little too inhuman, and we were usually allowed to visit the dying. Needless to say, we were generally covered with vermin after such visits.

When a sufficiently large number of persons had been collected they were taken to the station. On the way, however, men and women who

⁷⁶ Part of an account of the experiences of Silesian priests, *Beitraege*, Vol I, p 346 ff

were fit to work were simply separated from their families and taken away to a labour-camp. There were dreadful, heart-breaking scenes when families were separated in this way. The people who were sent to Germany were locked in cattle-trucks, as many as eighty and ninety in one truck, and the journey lasted for weeks. The state in which they usually arrived in the Russian zone can well be imagined.

Report No. 51

Neisse, Upper Silesia⁷⁷

On January 24th, 1946, at about ten o'clock in the morning, Polish militia entered our village and forced us to leave our homes within ten minutes' time. They told us to line up on the street with our luggage. There was no time for weeping and lamenting. Since July, 1945, we had been expecting this to happen at any moment, for the same thing was happening every day to hundreds of other persons in the neighbouring villages and towns. With heavy hearts we put some bread and salt in our suitcases — most of our possessions, including practically all our clothes and underwear had been stolen by the Poles after the armistice when we had returned to our village —, said a last prayer together, and then left the room we had been living in, which was all that had been left to us of our entire property under the Polish regime. On the street we encountered the remaining inhabitants of the village who had been rounded up, numbering about ninety, and together we set out, on this bitter cold January day, comrades in distress, bound for an unknown destination. After we had trudged along for about an hour the Polish guards took us to the casemates of the old fortress dating from the time of Frederick the Great. Here, entirely cut off from the rest of the world, we were locked up in the dungeons, which were infested with rats and vermin. We were not the first to be incarcerated here — thousands before us had shared the same fate, as could be seen from the rubbish and rags with which the place was littered. In one of the cells there were some old women who had been brought in with the last lot of prisoners, but were too ill to leave when these had been taken away. Some Sisters of Charity used to come in and look after them. One of my aunts is also a Sister of Charity, and I sent her a message through one of the Sisters, who used to come to the prison, to let her know what had happened to us. A few hours later my aunt came along to the prison to visit us, but the guard refused to admit her, so all she could do was to hand over the soup she had brought for us to him. He passed it on to us, and in this way the small children with us in the cell at least got something warm to eat. We all of us felt the cold very much. So far we still had a little bread left. But we found it utterly impossible to snatch a little sleep as we were all so terrified of what the Poles would do to us.

⁷⁷ s *Beiträge*, Vol I, p. 363 ff

We suddenly heard a commotion outside in the yard and a few moments later some militiamen entered the cell and ordered us to leave our luggage behind and go across to the adjoining casemates. When we got there they searched each of us for money, jewelry, and other valuables, and took whatever they found on us. When we eventually returned to our cells we discovered that our luggage had been ransacked in the meantime and that a lot of things were missing. Some of us had been robbed of our bedding, many of us of our shoes, clothes, and money, and most of the food had been stolen. We had hardly recovered from this shock when the Poles began shouting out new commands. This time we were told to line up in a queue as we were to be taken to the station.

As we passed through the dark and sinister portal of the casemates a lot more of our luggage disappeared, as it was simply snatched out of our hands by the Poles. When we got to the station there was no train to be seen, and we stood about on the platform in the icy cold and snow for eight hours, in fact, the whole night, waiting for it to come. When it finally arrived at seven o'clock next morning it was crowded with people who had suffered the same fate as ourselves. Hitting us with their rifles, the Polish guards drove us into the trucks, which were so packed that we could hardly stand. Each truck contained as many as seventy, ninety, or even a hundred persons.

The train set off a few hours later, and after a journey lasting several days, during which we had no food whatsoever, we reached Linderode near Forst, sixteen miles away from the frontier. The train then stopped here for three weeks, until the middle of February, 1946. There were about six thousand of us, the trucks were not heated, and we had nothing to eat, but were simply left to our fate. Those who still had a few scraps of dry bread or anything else to eat were considered extremely lucky. The rest of us went into the neighbouring villages, which were all occupied by the Poles, and begged for food. After a couple of days the number of persons who went to the villages to beg began to increase at such a rate that the villagers refused to give us anything at all. The only way to obtain a little bread and a few potatoes was to pay for them either in zlotys or in valuables. Many of the people exchanged the clothes and coats they were wearing for something to eat. The Polish militiamen raided the trucks every day, robbing and tormenting the people. All the men and women who were still wearing shoes and boots which were in good condition were forced to take them off — the Polish militiamen threatening them with their rifles — and were given old footwear in exchange. This kind of thing went on for hours on end. The Poles then exchanged the goods they had stolen for butter, sausages, and alcohol which they obtained from their fellow-countrymen in the villages.

But these raids on the part of the Poles were nothing compared to the sufferings we endured as regards hunger and cold. For three weeks we lived in the trucks, and the icy wind, the rain and the snow came through the chinks. The nights were dreadful and seemed endless. There was hardly enough room for us to stand, let alone sit down or lie down.

Most of us had swollen feet, felt sick, and were suffering from toothache. In addition, we were troubled by the thought that this state of affairs might continue for quite a considerable time. Despite all this we still had the courage to say a prayer together in the evenings and to sing some hymns. It was our only consolation. Every morning at dawn the doors of the trucks were unlocked by the Polish guards and the dead who had not survived the night were carried out. Their number increased alarmingly from day to day. Sometimes there were as many as ten.

Eventually, at the end of three weeks, when we were all so exhausted and weak that we were not even capable of going to search for food, the train set off once more and returned to Neisse. As the Russians had closed the frontier we were taken back home again and reached Neisse the middle of February, 1946. For the next few months we worked for the Poles and barely managed to exist, until finally, on June 2nd, 1946, we were sent to Germany.

Report No. 52

The Parish of Alt-Patschkau, near Neisse, Upper Silesia ⁷⁸

The parish of Alt-Patschkau included 650 Catholics (1942) and one person of another denomination (1929). The church (All Saints) is mentioned as the parish-church in historical records in 1293, and as being part of the parish of Patschkau since early times, in 1579. The east transept of the present church dates from the 15th century. The rest of the church was built in 1890. Until 1810 Alt-Patschkau belonged to the primates of Breslau. It became a parish on January 1st, 1919.

... On Friday, January 18th, in bitterly cold weather, we were taken to Neisse, 14 miles away, on a lorry. At the Polish headquarters there, we were robbed of our possessions. From there we were taken to the station, where the Poles deprived us of all our German money. We were then put into cattle-trucks, where we spent the next five days and nights. The hardships we suffered during this time are indescribable. The cattle-trucks had been locked on the outside, and there were sixty of us, including women, children, persons who were dying, priests, nuns, and deaconesses, crowded together in one truck. Polish militiamen kept raiding the trucks and robbing us. In addition, we had nothing to eat. After passing through Teuplitz station, on the right bank of the Lusatian Neisse, the Poles made us get out of the trucks. They searched us for valuables, robbed us, took all our Polish money from us, and then told us we could cross over into the Russian zone. The only means of crossing the Neisse was by way of a railway-bridge. It was a sorry procession that trudged along on the gravel between the railway-lines and on the narrow path at the side. There were about three thousand of us. The temperature was about ten degrees below zero, and it took us three hours to cross the bridge. When we reached the Russian zone the Russians at

⁷⁸ s. *Beitraege*, Vol. III, p. 502 ff

first refused to admit us, as they maintained that the Poles had expelled us from Silesia without having any reason to do so and had, moreover, not informed them, the Russians, of this step. We kept having to stand about in the cold till they allowed us to move another forty-five yards or so. Those who were dying were given the extreme unction by a priest. They were simply left lying there and their bodies were then removed at night by the friars in Forst. These hours were the worst I ever lived through in all my life. One of the friars carried my sister, who was seriously ill, the rest of the way across the bridge. We spent two nights in Forst (Lusatia) under distressing conditions. I slept on the floor, under a table. Two days later we left for Guben by train and arrived there at two o'clock in the morning on January 25th. We went to a hospital there which was conducted by deaconesses and fortunately found accommodation there. I am extremely grateful to the sisters at the hospital for their kindness and help. My sister, Agnes Pohl, died there next morning, January 26th. My housekeeper was also very ill and in the same hospital; she barely escaped pneumonia.

The church in Alt-Patschkau was not damaged, as the village was not in the fighting zone.

Report No. 53

The Parish of Alt-Wette, near Neisse, Upper Silesia⁷⁹

The parish of Alt-Wette included 1,178 Catholics (1942) and 2 persons of other denominations (1929). The church (St John the Baptist's) is mentioned in historical records at the beginning of the 14th century. The present church was built at the earliest about the middle of the 13th century, whilst the tower was built in 1866.

... When we arrived home again on May 17th, 1945, we found that the village, with the exception of a few barns and houses, had not been damaged so very much. The church-tower had been hit by a shell and the roof of the church had been damaged, but the interior was intact. The vicarage had suffered comparatively little damage, despite the fact that it had served as the main German command post and was surrounded by trenches and pillboxes... When we entered the vicarage the Poles were just in the act of stealing the vestments and sacred linen... Heavily armed Russian and Polish hordes appeared in the village every day and went about raiding and looting the houses at night. The nights were simply dreadful. The Germans were tortured, beaten, and robbed of all their possessions. Everyone was most relieved whenever regular Russian units appeared in the village, because they always behaved in a correct manner and protected us from the Poles. As a rule there were no Poles to be seen in the village when the Russians were about. Many of the villagers died as a result of the ill-treatment they received at the hands of the

⁷⁹ s *Beitraege*, Vol II, p 608 ff

Polish militia. One of their favourite methods of torture was to make the people lie down on the floor, completely naked, and then they would trample on them with their hobnailed boots.

One of the inhabitants of Alt-Wette, Farmer Emanuel Schwobe, who attempted to protect his daughter from being raped, was brutally stabbed to death by a gang of Russian soldiers, including an officer, all of whom were drunk, the same night that they attempted to break into the vicarage. Polish militia shot a farmer's wife, twenty-seven-year old Mrs. Anna Herde, on the street in front of her farm in broad daylight. They wanted to separate her from her child and take her away as her husband had fled. She collapsed with her child in her arms. Her assassins then ordered those who had witnessed the murder to bury her body at once in the centre of the village, namely in the street. The Germans, however, refused to obey this order, despite the fact that the Poles threatened to shoot them. Thereupon they were allowed to bury her in the churchyard, but without a coffin.

The atrocities that occurred were so numerous that it is impossible to describe them all. Many of the villagers were taken to Neisse and thrust into the dungeons of the old casemates there, where a number of them died of hunger-typhus. Two of the most important farmers, Franz Franke and Alois Herde, died there of this disease. Neither of them had ever committed any offence. Eighteen esteemed and respected landowners, all of them decent-living men, whose names were found on a list of National Socialist Party members, were arrested and taken to a camp in Upper Silesia and forced to work in the mines. Within a few months twelve of them died of hunger-typhus. Their names were. Josef Meissner, farmer, Wilhelm Knittel, book-keeper, Alfred Heckel, the mayor, Paul Altmann, parish-clerk, Paul Marschke, farmer, Paul Grieger, plumber, Karl Wagner, farmer, Berthold Hartelt, painter, Franz Lerch, headmaster, Karl Soback, labourer, Dr. Ernst Joppich, veterinary surgeon, Gerhard Schwobe, farmer's son, Karl Kerl of Duerenstein, Peter von Pietroski, schoolmaster, Alfons Meisner, landowner, Stuschke, farmer, Julius Elsner, innkeeper, and Haunschild, farmer.

Four survivors have not yet been released, four years later. The vicarage served as a refuge for the women and girls of the village at night. It was converted into a kind of fortress, the doors were barricaded with heavy oak beams and logs, and thus offered a certain amount of protection. Hardly a night passed without some kind of disturbance, even though it was sometimes only a case of having to billet Poles or Russians. The Poles were the rulers of the village and the church and could do as they liked with the Germans. With great cunning the Polish children very soon discovered all the hiding-places chosen by the Germans to conceal their possessions, and promptly robbed the people of the village, even the poorest, of their last bed or their last knife and fork. They even found linen and clothes that had been buried in milk-cans in fields that were a long way out of the village. For weeks we consoled ourselves with the hope that the Americans and the British would soon

put a stop to this Polish regime and would also deal with the problem of expulsion of the Germans from Silesia. But our hopes were in vain. The village was gradually depopulated of its German inhabitants, who were driven out of their houses, forced to leave all their possessions and property behind, and not allowed to take anything at all with them when they were expelled by the Poles.

Report No. 54

The Parish of Alt-Wilmsdorf, near Neisse, Upper Silesia ⁸⁰

The parish of Alt-Wilmsdorf included 220 Catholics (1942) and 4 persons of other denominations (1929). The church (Our Lady of Mount Carmel) was built in 1843; various additions were made in 1901. Alt-Wilmsdorf was made a parish on November 21st, 1860, after having previously been part of Patschkau. The village itself was a German settlement as early as the 13th century. As the number of inhabitants was at no time very large and as the churches of the neighbouring villages were within easy reach, Alt-Wilmsdorf had no church of its own prior to the 19th century, but only possessed a small bell (from 1805 onwards) which hung from a covered platform in the village and was rung at the Angelus and at funerals. In former times the Catholics used to attend divine service and school at Alt-Patschkau, two miles away from Alt-Wilmsdorf.

On March 22nd, 1945, an enemy plane flew over the village and fired at the houses with a machine-gun. One of the bullets whizzed through a window of the inn kept by Mr. Hamich and nearly hit his little daughter, Gretel. After this incident the commanding officer of the military base stationed at Alt-Wilmsdorf gave orders that the village was to be evacuated next morning and that the inhabitants should flee to Maehrisch-Ostrau, in Czechoslovakia. All those persons who had a cart of their own and those who were going to be taken along in someone else's cart were to be ready to start at three o'clock in the morning. The rest of the inhabitants were to be taken to Czechoslovakia on army lorries. These orders were carried out next day. At three o'clock in the morning, on March 23rd, all the carts set off.

The inhabitants of Alt-Wilmsdorf who were taken away by army lorries, however, had a rough time. Mrs. H. describes their experiences in the following account. "On March 23rd, 1945, we were taken as far as Glatz by lorry. Next day we travelled on to Czechoslovakia. On March 27th, we arrived in the village of Rimau (Moravia), where we stayed until April 20th. The food-rations we received were quite decent, and, in any case, we still had some supplies of our own. On April 20th, we were taken to the station at Iglau, 25 miles away, on farm-drays. We spent two days and a night there out in the open, in the pouring rain. Then they put us on an open goods train which took us to Muehlhausen (Bohemia). We were billeted in a camp (school) there for seven weeks. The

⁸⁰ s. *Beitraege*, Vol II, p 611 ff

food we received was very poor. We lived on potatoes, water, and bread, and most of us were in the depths of despair. Grown-ups and children died every day and were buried in the forest. Mrs. Anna Scholowsky and her daughter died within three days of each other. The first lot of Russians appeared on May 19th. Threatening us with their revolvers, they robbed us of all our jewelry and valuables. After that we were molested by them every day. On June 29th, 1945, we were told that we were going to be sent home, but instead of taking us to the station the Czech guards took us to a big camp in the forest. The camp consisted of eight wooden sheds. The first two days we were there we received nothing at all to eat, but afterwards they gave us a spoonful of thin, watery soup and half a pound of bread per day. By day we were forced to work very hard. The Russians raided the camp every night, stealing everything they could lay hands on, beating the inmates, and raping and abducting the women and girls. Thank goodness, nothing like that happened to us. We disguised ourselves as old women and prayed fervently that they would leave us alone. And, fortunately, we were actually spared. We looked like skeletons, particularly the children. And for this reason we asked to be allowed to work on a farm, for we wanted to save our children from dying of starvation. They actually complied with our request, but we had a hard time on the farm and often spent sleepless nights guarding the door, so that the Russians would not molest us. But we did at least regain some of our strength there. On September 8th, 1946, we were transferred to the discharge camp at Pisek and had all sorts of experiences whilst there. On September 20th, 1946, we arrived in Germany, in Zittau, Saxony. We were very dismayed on being told there that the Poles would not allow us to return to Silesia and that we were being sent to the west. A few of the families set out on foot for Alt-Wilmsdorf and actually managed to get there after a most difficult journey. But the rest of us, who had been taken away on army lorries in March, 1945, have never seen our native village again.

When the people who had left Alt-Wilmsdorf in private carts returned there, they encountered the first lot of Russian and Polish militia in the neighbouring village of Schwammelwitz. In Alt-Wilmsdorf itself there were only a few of the former Polish workers who patrolled the village, heavily armed, and had obviously been chosen to represent the Polish administrative authorities until a Polish mayor should be appointed. Very soon Polish families began to settle in the village. Most of them were from Eastern Galicia, where they had lived in very poor circumstances and their entire property had consisted of a small cottage, a plot of land, and one cow. As the Russians had annexed Eastern Galicia and forced the Poles living there to leave their homes, many of them were assigned to Alt-Wilmsdorf by the Polish administrative head of the Neisse district. They introduced themselves to the German farmers, owners of small holdings and cottagers, as the new owners, with the words, "I now farmer, you Hitler, work." They chose the best rooms in which to live and took the furniture, clothes, and linen, etc., belonging to the

German owners for their own use, but allowed the Germans to continue living in the houses.

On February 6th, 1946, the Polish militia drove us out of our houses, beating us with whips and the butt-end of their rifles. We were only allowed to take a few of our possessions with us. We spent the first night at the inn. Many of the villagers who spent the night with us in the main room of the inn had been beaten so badly that their faces were swollen and bleeding. Next day they made us tramp to Neisse despite the fact that it was bitterly cold and we had had nothing to eat. On the way there they beat us repeatedly. In Neisse they locked us up in the cells of the fortress which were filthy. Next day they took us to the station and put us into cattle-trucks which let the rain in. They made us stay there three days and three nights. On the third day they forced us to trudge through the rain and snow to some barracks where they kept us for three days. Incidentally, we had had nothing to eat for a week. After that they took us back to Neisse and made us spend the night in a large hall which was icy cold. We were starving with cold and hunger. Next morning they took us to the camp at Schwammelwitz, one and a half miles away from Alt-Wilmsdorf. We stayed in this camp for nearly four months and they used to march us off to work every day. Whilst we were at the camp, Mrs. Wagner. Mr. Leder, and Mrs. Thienel died. Mr. Korte, whom the Poles almost beat to death, escaped from the camp in Neisse and was never heard of again. Finally, on May 31st, 1946, we were released and evacuated from Silesia, and after a four days' journey arrived in Einbeck (Hanover).

Report No. 55

The Parish of Arnoldsdorf, near Neisse, Upper Silesia ⁸¹

Together with the village of Wildgrund, two miles away, the parish of Arnoldsdorf included 1,590 Catholics (1942) and 39 persons of other denominations (1929). A church (St. Bartholomew's) is mentioned in historical records in 1339. Arnoldsdorf was formerly incorporated with the parish of Zuckmantel in that part of Silesia which was an Austrian province. A new frontier was set up after the Seven Years' War. The first parish-church was built in 1754. The present church was built in 1907.

... Russians raided the houses every day. They robbed the inhabitants and beat them in a most brutal manner. Many of the women and girls were so terrified of what the Russians might do to them that they often begged me to allow them to spend the night in the vestry or in the organ-loft, a request which I never refused. At the beginning of June, 1945, the Russians departed, but the Poles were no better and continued to torment the villagers in a manner that is indescribable. The worst two days that Arnoldsdorf experienced were the Feast of St. Peter and St. Paul and Michaelmas Day. On both of these days the Germans were driven out of their homes and forced to leave the village. It was a terrible sight.

⁸¹ s *Beitraege*, Vol III, p. 509

The aged and sick were taken out of the village on handcarts. And then they actually dare to call that sort of thing "evacuation"! We are not refugees, — no, we are expellees, who have been turned out of our homes and farms... It took us three weeks to clean up the vicarage as it was in such a dreadful, filthy state. The church did not suffer any damage during the war.

Report No. 56

The Parish of Bischofswalde, near Neisse, Upper Silesia ⁸²

The parish of Bischofswalde included 1,000 Catholics (1942) and 19 persons of other denominations (1929). The church of the Holy Annunciation is mentioned in historical records in 1286. The vaulting of the present church dates from 1725, the tower was built in 1750. Until 1810 Bischofswalde belonged to the primates of Breslau.

As the fighting front was dangerously near, our entire village was evacuated on March 19th, 1945. As it was my duty to stay with my parishioners I joined their trek.

When the German armies capitulated we were in Christianberg in Czechoslovakia which was at that time occupied by the Americans. About a week later all the refugee treks were collected by the Americans and reorganized as huge treks, consisting of thousands of persons. The Americans then handed us over to the Russians on May 17th, 1945, at Wodnian. The Russians and the Czechs robbed us of most of our possessions four days later.

I do not think any of us will ever forget that first dreadful night, when the Russian soldiers raped the women and were assisted in a most brutal manner by Czech men and women. In fact, we later came to the conclusion that the Czechs were even worse than the Russians, — which is saying a lot!

During the first four days and nights before they robbed us, the Russians threatened to shoot me three times. They sent me to a labour-camp twice, but I managed to escape and get back to my parishioners. On one occasion I was horsewhipped by a Russian, despite the fact that I was attired as a priest. The Russian who flogged me tore my robes off and started kicking my biretta about as if it were a football. He then trampled on my cape with his muddy boots. All this was proof of the extent to which Russia had once more become a Christian country!

After we had been robbed of all our possessions and broken in spirit, our pitiful trek was sent over the Czech frontier, at Neu-Bistritz, into Austria.

They had deprived us of everything, but the one thing they could not rob us of was our faith in the Lord. In those days of suffering and distress we said many a fervent prayer. And the Blessed Virgin looked down upon us and protected us, as if by a miracle.

⁸² s. *Beitraege*, Vol. I, p. 281.

*Report No. 57***Franzdorf, near Neisse, Upper Silesia⁸³**

According to the ecclesiastical census of 1929 Franzdorf included about 190 Catholics and 4 persons of other denominations. It was incorporated with the parish of Reinschdorf which numbered 1,605 Catholics (1942) and 51 persons of other denominations (1929). The church at Reinschdorf (St Margaret's) is mentioned in historical records in 1335 and probably already existed as early as 1287. The present church was built in 1649. Until 1810 Reinschdorf belonged to the theological college at Neisse.

After the capitulation of the German armies the inhabitants of Franzdorf returned to the village. The estates and farms had meanwhile been seized and occupied by former Polish workers (those who had been employed by us and many more from neighbouring villages). The Poles had wrought great havoc in the village. Whereas the Russians had only removed the vestments from the chapel at the castle and had made costumes out of some of them, the Poles ransacked and looted the entire chapel, and threw the benches, the confessional chair, and all the fittings out of the window.

The crucifix over the altar and the statues of the various saints were removed. One of the villagers later found the crucifix and took it to the priest at Reinschdorf, who had meanwhile returned. All the large oil-paintings and two valuable wooden statues of St. Joseph and the Madonna, both of them by famous artists, were missing. Our beautiful chapel at the castle was later turned into a place of amusement by the Poles.

*Report No. 58***The Parish of Gostal (Gostitz), near Neisse, Upper Silesia⁸⁴**

The parish of Gostal (Gostitz) included 635 Catholics (1942) and 11 persons of other denominations (1929). The church (St Nicholas') is mentioned in historical records in 1390. The present church was built about the beginning of the 17th century. It was completely renovated and a new vestry built in 1914 and 1915. Until 1810 Gostal belonged to the primates of Breslau.

May 8th, 1945. The inhabitants of Gostal and Fuchswinkel had not been evacuated. The Russians now occupied our village. As there had been no fighting in Gostal and the priest and the parishioners had remained in the village, the church and the vicarage were neither damaged nor looted. Three days after the Russians had occupied the village, the inhabitants were ordered to hand over all wireless sets to them. There was a large supply of goods of every kind in Gostal as the Nazis had set up a supply-depot in our village, consisting of two big sheds. These goods were now distributed among the population.

⁸³ s. *Beitraege*, Vol. II, pp. 655-56.

⁸⁴ s. *Beitraege*, Vol. II, p. 663.

Four weeks later the first Polish civilians arrived in the village. They were assigned to the farms. A Polish police superintendent arrived with them. On June 28th, 1945, at nine o'clock in the morning, he issued an order that all Germans must assemble in front of the school at eleven o'clock as they were going to be sent to Germany...

... At twelve o'clock Polish soldiers (militia), armed with whips, appeared and drove the people along like a herd of cattle to Grenztal (Kamitz), the next village. On the way they were robbed of all their suitcases which were promptly loaded onto a cart standing in readiness. Soon afterwards many of the inhabitants returned to the village after begging the Russian commanding officer in Patschkau to help them. Three days later, however, on July 1st (Sunday), those who had returned were once more driven out of their houses. They were treated most brutally by the Poles and taken to villages that were further away without being allowed to take anything at all with them...

Report No. 59

Gross-Giesmannsdorf, near Neisse, Upper Silesia⁸⁵

The curacy of Gross-Giesmannsdorf (formerly Friedenthal-Giesmannsdorf) numbered 1,231 Catholics (1942) and 169 persons of other denominations (1929). The church (Visitation of Our Lady) was built in 1872. From November 17th, 1888, onwards Gross-Giesmannsdorf was a chapel community until May 17th, 1924, when it became a curacy.

... At the beginning of August we were forced to leave Gross-Giesmannsdorf again and moved into an untenanted workman's cottage in the next village. At the time, this actually saved us from being expelled from Gross-Giesmannsdorf with the rest of the inhabitants in the middle of August. Those of the population who were fit to work were taken to a camp and confined there. They were marched off to work every day by military guards armed with bayonets. The rest of the people were taken away on lorries and trains. All the German inhabitants were being expelled from Neisse and the surrounding districts. I myself was suffering from typhus at the time and had no doctor and no medical attention. The Polish medical health officer of the district merely came to the house and ascertained that I was a typhus case and then affixed a notice to the door. Thanks to this notice we were spared the unpleasant visits of the Russians and the Poles for a couple of weeks. It was during times of sickness like this that the villagers helped each other in a way that was truly touching. Those who had recovered from the disease, which, incidentally, continued to spread, nursed those who were ill. The worst part of all was the hunger we had to endure when convalescent. There was hardly any food to be had, and we were obliged to go out into the fields and steal potatoes and corn, or beg from the Poles. A number

⁸⁵ s. *Beitraege*, Vol. III, p. 535.

of Poles from the Cracow district had settled in our village and they were fairly kindly disposed towards the Germans. Nevertheless, we had to be very careful, for the Polish militiamen thrashed anyone they caught stealing or begging. For weeks we were forced to wear white bands on our sleeves to show that we were Germans. The food situation improved somewhat when we were given permission to glean potatoes and vegetables, etc. Indeed, we had already collected quite a nice supply for the winter when the order was issued on January 17th, 1946, that all the Germans in the village were to be expelled. We were just having our dinner when three Polish militiamen suddenly entered the room, and, pointing their revolvers at us, ordered us to be ready to leave the house in fifteen minutes. We each of us picked up a rucksack and some bedding, and then we were taken into a room and searched. Any jewelry we had attempted to conceal in our clothes was taken from us, but we were allowed to keep the money we had on us. Despite the fact that it was bitterly cold, the Poles made us walk the five and a half miles to Neisse, where we then had to spend the night in the open. There was the dead body of a woman lying quite near to us at the spot where we spent the night. The Polish militiamen kept walking past us, carrying piles of blankets which they had taken away from the expellees. Next day we were all crowded into cattle-trucks and told that we were going to be taken to Siberia. The journey lasted for over a week and most of the time we lived on the meagre rations we had taken with us. There were two trucks on the train containing supplies of bread, but it was not until we had almost reached the frontier that the Poles released these supplies and sold them to us. I do not know exactly how many people died on the journey, but at least there were two in our truck. The corpses were transferred to an empty truck and were then buried by the Germans at Forst, in shell-craters, on the Polish side of the frontier. Perhaps their relatives are still seeking them in vain.

Report No. 60

The Parish of Heinersdorf, near Neisse, Upper Silesia⁸⁶

The parish of Heinersdorf included 640 Catholics (1942) and 30 persons of other denominations (1929). The church (St Mary Magdalen's) is mentioned in historical records as the parish-church in about 1305. In 1579 Heinersdorf became part of the parish of Barzdorf. The present church was probably built in the 16th century. From 1760 onwards Heinersdorf was part of the parish of Schwammelwitz, but in 1782 it became an independent community, and on March 19th, 1887, it became a parish. Until 1810 it belonged to the primates of Breslau.

It almost seemed like a miracle that our village should have been spared destruction. At two-thirty in the afternoon, on May 8th, 1945, after the German armies had capitulated, Russian troops entered Heinersdorf. The mayor, P. K., and the priest went to the Russian commanding

⁸⁶ s. *Betrage*, Vol I, p 312 ff

officer and begged him to treat the inhabitants of the village considerably as the latter had been longing for the war to end. The Russian commanding officer complied with this request. Consequently, as compared to other districts, no cases of rape occurred in Heinersdorf, either during the Russian invasion or during the whole of the time that the village and environ were under Russian occupation. Raiding and looting, however, went on both during the day and at night. Only one atrocity occurred during the time that Heinersdorf was under Russian occupation. That was on May 12th, 1945, when, at the instigation of a Polish woman who had worked on a farm in Heinersdorf, a Russian soldier shot Franz Machate, a devout Catholic, the former head of the National Socialist Farmers' Association.

Everyone rejoiced on hearing that the Russians would be leaving the village on June 24th, 1945. Before they left, several of the Russians expressed the opinion that it was all very well for us to rejoice at their departure, but that we should soon be weeping once the Poles had taken over.

... To our horror the Poles began to terrorize the Germans as soon as they arrived, which was on June 27th, 1945. Polish youths, most of whom were heavily armed, were assigned by a Polish administrative official to take over the various farms, not as workers but as owners. In the case of small farms one Pole was assigned, whereas two were established on the larger farms as the new owners. The estate was divided up among three Poles. The actual owners were deprived of all their rights, regardless of whether the property had been in their family for generations or not. They were obliged to hand over all their possessions and all the keys to the new owners. They were not even allowed to take their clothes and their money with them when they moved into the smallest room in the house, which the Poles magnanimously allotted to them as accommodation. As a rule it was the room that the farm-hand had formerly slept in. If any of them ventured to remove any of their own property, such as clothes or linen, the Poles immediately reported them to the Polish militia, whereupon they were punished and beaten in a most brutal and inhuman manner.

Both during the day and at night the Germans were constantly being assaulted and attacked by Polish and Russian marauders, who robbed them of their last possessions. They were taken along to the militia headquarters by Polish and Communist soldiers for the slightest offence, which, as a rule, was invented by the Poles, and were imprisoned in the cellar there for days on end and beaten and flogged...

On January 19th, 1946, I was called upon to officiate at a Polish wedding in the morning and was to leave Heinersdorf at two o'clock in the afternoon. Shortly before my departure two Polish youths appeared at the house and searched all my luggage. They told me that I could not take my robes, albs and stoles, etc., with me. Then some Polish soldiers arrived on the scene and likewise searched all my belongings. They

ordered me to give them three pounds of gold, which, of course, I did not have. Next, they took me along to the church and I had to open the tabernacle and show them the holy wafers and the ciborium. They took the key to the tabernacle away from me. Then they led me into the vestry, made me strip and searched me, without the least feeling of shame. When I asked them whether they, as Catholics, were not ashamed of themselves for treating a priest in this manner, they replied, "We aren't Catholics, we're Communists." When they had finished with me, after stealing some of my possessions, I was led into the church again. They then took my housekeeper into the vestry and searched her in the same manner. They made her strip and searched her from head to toe, even her genitals. They made her take her hair down and even tapped all her teeth to make sure that she had no valuables concealed on her person. After they had pocketed some of her possessions they allowed her to get dressed and told her that she must not speak about what had happened. Then they locked the church and took us back to the vicarage, where they seized hold of my mother, who was eighty, and made her go with them to one of the outbuildings, where they searched her. It was five-thirty in the afternoon by the time they had finished with us and we were allowed to depart...

I heard later from some of my parishioners that the Poles had wrought such havoc at the vicarage after my departure that the Polish priest in Schwammelwitz had been disgusted at their behaviour and had in fact expressed his indignation in one of his sermons. During the first few days after I had left, the house had been locked and guarded, but later on Poles smashed all the windows, stole the entire furniture, tore up the floor-boards, and removed the mains. All the church-records, together with the entire Borromean library and my own personal books, were thrown onto a heap in the vicarage-garden and burned.

Report No. 61

The Parish of Neisse-Neuland, near Neisse, Upper Silesia ⁸⁷

The parish of Neisse-Neuland included 6,500 Catholics (1942) and 286 persons of other denominations (1929). The church, dedicated to St John the Baptist and St Nicholas, was built in 1770 in the baroque style. Considerable additions were made in 1894 and also in more recent years. The following churches existed in Neisse-Neuland in the Middle Ages.

- 1) St. John the Baptist's, mentioned in historical records in 1311. From 1372 onwards it was the parish-church and was incorporated in 1477 with the theological college which was transferred to Neisse from Ottmachau. In 1663, however, it was demolished on account of the Turkish menace.
- 2) St Nicholas' Church, which was probably the parish-church originally, is mentioned in historical records in 1371. In 1477 it was incorporated with the theological college. It was destroyed by the Prussians in 1741.

⁸⁷ s. *Beitraege*, Vol. II, p. 734 ff.

... The people were tortured with hunger. Many of them died of infectious diseases (hunger-typhus). Normally there had been eighty or ninety deaths a year in the parish of Neuland. Last year there were three hundred. There were no coffins to be had; the dead were wrapped in rags or paper and then buried. The heroism displayed by our girls and women will perhaps only be rightly appreciated and esteemed in future times. So many of them were raped and contracted incurable diseases. I know of many cases in which the victims were twelve-year old girls and old women of eighty-nine. I was often disturbed during the night when gangs of Russian soldiers were on the hunt for "victims". They would level their revolvers at me, lock me in a room or else leave one of their number to guard me whilst the rest searched the house for "panienkas" (girls). Adjoining the house there was a hay-loft which could only be entered by means of a ladder, and often as many as ten girls would seek refuge here during the night. Many of the girls and women used to hide out in the open at night, in the furrows in the fields, in the grass, in bushes, or in barns...

... A woman, whom the Russians stopped and made trudge along with us, told us that on the previous evening (March 24th, 1945) several Franciscans had been shot in Neisse-Rochus, and that she had been raped fifty times...

When we reached Heiligkreuz⁸⁸ some children ran towards us to greet us. They were Mrs. K.'s children, one of the first families to return to Nieder-Neuland. Mrs. K. has lost her little girl, Gretel, who was nine. She was shot by the Russians because she tried to protect her mother from being raped. They buried her at the cenotaph in Ober-Neuland...

Heiligkreuz was a sad sight when we returned there in May, 1945. The front of the house had been badly damaged by shells, and the retreat had suffered most. The roof of the church had been hit by a shell and the group of figures over the porch had been damaged. The interior of the house gave evidence, all too clearly, of wilful destruction.

Neuland, too, had been very badly damaged. The church in Neuland and the one in Konradsdorf were a terrible sight. Most of the altar-cloths, the albs and stoles, etc., and the linen had either disappeared or had been cut to pieces, torn or soiled. The vestments lay scattered about outside in the open or in the church. Most of them had been ripped open and the lining removed. Vestments and altar-cloths had been used to decorate the pillboxes. The chalices had been damaged and rendered unfit for use. Part of the altar in the church at Neuland had been knocked over. There were three bullet-holes in the tabernacle in the

⁸⁸ Heiligkreuz near Neisse was a training college for missionaries of the Society of the Divine Word (S.V.D.) and at the same time the head seat of this Society in Eastern Germany. In 1941 there were 28 priests and 64 lay-brothers at Heiligkreuz.

church at Konradsdorf, and the right door of the tabernacle (made of steel) had been forced open with a hatchet. The church was littered with refuse. Words cannot describe the acts of vandalism that had been committed.⁸⁹

Report No. 62

The Parish of Neisse-Neuland, near Neisse, Upper Silesia⁹⁰

On March 25th, of this year Mr. W. M., the architect, of Neisse-Neuland, was arrested and taken to prison, after a Polish woman, who lived at his house, had informed against him. She told the Polish secret police that Mr. M. had beaten her, which was a lie, and filed a motion for punishment so that Mr. M. would be taken to a concentration camp and she could then gain possession of the house and the furniture, as he would be out of the way. No interrogation was held.

I was confined in the same cell (in the cellar of the villa which had formerly belonged to Dr. Tschoetschel) and witnessed the following scene.

At about midnight on March 25th, the Polish Secret Police commissary appeared in the cell in a drunken condition, together with three guards, who were armed. M.'s name was called and he stood up. Without saying a word the Polish commissary then hit him in the face with his fist. Blood immediately oozed out of M.'s mouth as several of his teeth had been loosened by the blow, and the left side of his face was also bleeding. The commissary then asked him, "You German swine, how many times did you beat the Polish woman?" M. replied, "Never." Thereupon the commissary hit him in the face again. This procedure was repeated six times. After this inhuman treatment he kicked M. in the stomach and the latter collapsed. The commissary next ordered him to lie flat on the ground and began kicking him in the small of his back. After that M. was told to stand up again. The commissary now got hold of M.'s left ear and, squeezing it together as far as possible, began pulling it. Then he made M. lift a heavy wooden cask, hold it above his head, crouch down with knees bent, and jump forward. Muttering to himself, M. immediately collapsed on the floor. Thereupon the commissary kicked him until he stood up again. The two of us were then told to clean the walls of the cell, and had to scratch off all the dirty marks with the broken fragments of a plant-pot. After that we had to wipe the walls and sweep up the dust and dirt on the floor with our handkerchiefs. This went on until six-thirty in the morning, and during the whole of the time we were not allowed to sit down nor to snatch a little sleep. At seven o'clock in the morning they eventually released me, but M. was forced to remain in the cell. The drum of his left ear must have burst as a result of the ill-treatment he had received, because he suddenly went quite deaf.

⁸⁹ Cf. also pastoral messages to the members of the parish of Neisse-Neuland

⁹⁰ s. *Beitraege*, Vol. I, p. 362.

*Report No. 63***The Parish of Neunz, near Neisse, Upper Silesia ⁹¹**

The parish of Neunz included 976 Catholics (1942) and 5 persons of other denominations (1929). The church (Holy Cross) is mentioned in historical records in 1297. It was destroyed by fire in 1642, and the present church was then built in the baroque style. Until 1810 the parish of Neunz belonged to the primates of Breslau.

On January 17th, 1946, at one-thirty in the middle of the night, we were dragged out of our beds by the Poles. After they had robbed us of all our possessions they turned us out of the house and expelled us from our native village. A few hours later, they took us to Neisse, where, despite the fact that the weather was bitterly cold and the temperature at more than four degrees below zero, we were forced to spend the next night out in the open. By next morning many of the expellees were suffering from exposure and frost-bite. In the course of the day we were then crowded into railway-trucks. All those who were seriously ill were forced to remain behind, and no doubt many of them died as a result of the brutal treatment they received. — There were as many as a hundred persons in each truck, and after a journey which lasted five days we eventually reached the frontier-station, Forst, at two o'clock in the afternoon, on January 22nd. During the journey eight persons died in our truck (seven grown-ups and one child) and their bodies were thrown out of the truck just before we reached the frontier-station (about 250 yards away from the frontier). The Polish border-police then ordered us to get out of the trucks as quickly as possible, and beating us with their cudgels, they took us along to the station, where most of us were robbed of our remaining possessions. Seven other young men and myself were then told to bury the bodies of the eight persons who had died during the journey. The Poles made us walk along the railway embankment for about 500 yards until we came to the edge of a forest. Here they made us dig two huge graves. Two Polish soldiers then made us drag the bodies of the dead to the two graves and inter four bodies in each grave. Before they were interred, however, the Poles robbed the corpses and removed all articles of clothing which were still in good condition. After we had finished this task they made us dig another huge grave for some unknown purpose (it was about 3½ feet deep and 6 feet wide by 9 feet long). Having done this we were taken to the customs-house, where they gave us a small handcart. They then made us go back to the spot where all the expellees had been forced to get out of the train. When we got there they made us load three elderly persons (two men and a woman), who had refused to leave their luggage behind and were not able to walk as they were suffering from frost-bite, onto the handcart. These three elderly persons were still mentally alert and immediately asked us where we were taking them. But we could give them no answer as we had no idea what the Poles' intention was. The latter ordered us to take the two men and the woman as far as

⁹¹ s *Beitraege*, Vol. I, p. 386.

the forest, and when we got there they told us to throw them into the third grave that they had made us dig. When I asked the Poles what they meant by that, they said that we were to fill up the grave. We thereupon refused to do so and they set about beating us. I told the Poles that if it really was their intention that these three persons should die, then it would be better to put them out of their misery at once instead of burying them alive. Thereupon one of the Polish guards thrust a gun into my hand and told me to shoot them. I refused to comply with his request, saying that I had never in all my life killed anyone and that I could not kill anyone who was a fellow-countryman and a German. With that our dreadful task was apparently at an end, and one of the guards then led us away and took us to the frontier. On the way we heard the sound of several shots coming from the direction of the graves we had dug, so it can undoubtedly be assumed that the three persons who were later missing from our numbers were the same three persons who were shot by the Poles before crossing the frontier.

Description of the three missing persons:

1) Mr. Bruecke of Kaundorf, near Neisse, about sixty years old, of medium stature, about 5 ft. to 5 ft. 7 tall, fully attired, wearing a thick green jacket and a green cloth-cap.

2) The verger of the church at either Steinsdorf or Steinau, near Neisse, age 65 to 70, rather shabbily dressed, about 5 ft. tall, of slender build, walked with a stoop, and had rather a sonorous voice.

3) Tall, old woman, presumably from Steinsdorf, about 5 ft. 8 tall, stout, over 80 years old, well-dressed.

I herewith swear to God that I have made these statements to the best of my knowledge and in accordance with the truth.⁹²

Report No. 64

The Parish of Niederhermsdorf, near Neisse, Upper Silesia⁹³

The parish of Niederhermsdorf included 2,620 Catholics (1942) and 37 persons of other denominations (1929). The church (St Martin's) is mentioned in historical records in 1290. The present church was probably built in the baroque style in 1725. Until 1810 the village belonged to the primates of Breslau.

On March 17th, 1945, at two o'clock in the afternoon, the first Russian soldier appeared at the farm. He behaved in a perfectly correct manner and said to us, "You not afraid, Russian soldier kind." He did not even enter the house, but immediately rode off again on his bicycle in order to search for German soldiers. Half an hour later two other Russian soldiers appeared at the farm and informed us that the house was going to be used as a billet. As if to show us what this statement implied, one of the soldiers promptly seized hold of one of the womenfolk and tried to drag her inside the house. We tried to go to

⁹² Cf. also pastoral messages to the parishioners of Neunz.

⁹³ s. *Beitraege*, Vol. I, p. 377 ff.

her assistance, but the soldier threatened us with his revolver. The other Russian soldier then seized hold of the woman, too. Shortly before the arrival of the two Russians, Father Ozimek had offered to shelter five of the nuns at our house, because several Russian soldiers had forced their way into the convent... The nuns told us that the Russians had dragged one of the nuns into another room and had there raped her. They said that they had begged one of the Russian officers to spare them, but that their entreaties had been in vain...

The Russian soldiers then separated the men (Hundeck and two priests) and women so as to render the women completely defenceless. The menfolk were taken to a room on the first floor. The womenfolk were raped, one after another, the whole of that night, and the Russians did not even spare the nuns, despite the fact that some of them were about sixty-seven years old...

At two o'clock in the afternoon, on March 20th, 1945, the Russians set fire to the church. They had previously looted it, and we saw a number of Russians carrying off the organ-pipes. — At 5 p.m. on the same day Family Sch. and their servants and farm-hands returned from Neusorge. They had set out with tractors and lorries, but the Russians had robbed them of all their possessions on the way, and when they arrived back in Niederhermsdorf they had nothing at all but the clothes they were wearing. Upon their arrival the Russians immediately dragged them into a neighbouring house, and for the rest of the night the screams of the women and girls resounded through the air...

The following persons were shot by the Russians in March, 1945:

Mr. Holzheimer, Neusorge Mill, Sergeant Korsubeck, Mr. Thienel, jun., of Kleinwarthe, Mr. Kuban, cobbler, of Niederhermsdorf, Mr. Thomas, staying with Josef Stuschke of Niederhermsdorf, Mr. Malek, staying with Mr. Goerlich, Mr. and Mrs. Weinast, of Niederhermsdorf, Mr. Borkert, former farmer, of Neusorge, Farmer Hugo Christoph, of Neusorge, Mr. and Mrs. Koehler, of Neusorge, Mr. Koehler, former farmer, of Mannsdorf, Mr. Langer, of Mannsdorf, Farmer Lyko, retired railway-worker, of Kleinwarthe, Mrs. Juraschek, pensioner, of Bauschdorf, Mrs. Vogt, of Kleinwarthe, Mr. and Mrs. Seidel, of Bauschdorf, Mr. Kartsch, labourer, of Mauschdorf, Farmer Glatzel, of Bauschdorf, Eduard Klappauf, Johann Rieger, Ottilie Rieger, Josef Bude, Josef Hundeck, Franz Linke, Luise Wahner, August Hundeck, Emilie Ertelt, Martha Giessmann, and Miss Jung, of Kleinwarthe.

Eight men and four women died in the Polish penal camps at Neisse and Lamsdorf in Upper Silesia, as a result of the brutal treatment they received there.

As a result of the inhuman expulsion measures adopted by the Poles on February 6th and 7th, 1946, six men, eight women, and two children died of starvation and exposure in the casemates and barracks in Neisse in February, 1946...⁹⁴

⁹⁴ Cf. also pastoral messages to the parishioners of Niederhermsdorf.

*Report No. 65***The Parish of Niederhermsdorf, near Neisse, Upper Silesia**⁹⁵

Mrs. Emilie Ertelt, of Bauschdorf, wanted to protect her fifteen-year old daughter, who had been raped sixteen times on one and the same day. Holding a lighted candle in her hand, Mrs. Ertelt, and all those present in the room began to pray for her daughter. There were about sixty of us in the room, when four shots were suddenly fired at us. After a few moments some more Russians appeared and started shooting at Mrs. Ertelt, wounding her in the head. The blood streamed down her face, and the nuns who were present went to her assistance and bandaged her head. Soon afterwards another Russian appeared, a brutal-looking fellow, about thirty-five years of age, and fired a shot at close range. Mrs. Ertelt was killed instantaneously. We buried her in the cemetery at Niederhermsdorf. No attempt was made on the part of the Russian authorities to investigate the case or ascertain who committed the murder, despite the fact that the two priests went to the commanding officer next day and begged him to see that the womenfolk were not molested any more. The Russian officer refused to listen to anything the priests had to say about the murder of Mrs. Ertelt. He asked them for metal and even wanted metal fillings out of teeth! Then he gave orders that the womenfolk of the village were to keep indoors.

At about the same time the following persons were also murdered in our parish for similar reasons: Miss Martha Giessmann, of Mauschdorf, who was about thirty-five years old, and Miss Jung, of Kleinwarthe, who was slightly older. Miss Rapp, of Bauschdorf, who was in her thirties, was shot in the lungs when she tried to flee from Russian soldiers who had forced their way into her house. She was taken to the hospital at Friedland, however, and managed to recover.

*Report No. 66***The Parish of Niederhermsdorf, near Neisse, Upper Silesia**⁹⁶

During the winter of 1945/46 the expulsion of Germans from Silesia was prohibited. Indeed, the Poles had not been able to send the train bearing expellees from Neisse, which had left there on December 28th, 1945, across the zonal frontier and it had been held up at Goerlitz. Despite this fact, however, the Poles once more resorted to expulsion measures on January 17th and 18th, 1946, and expelled about three thousand persons, including forty priests (some of whom were over eighty) and about fifty nuns, from the district of Neisse. The train which was to convey the expellees westwards left Neisse on January 18th, 1946, at

⁹⁵ s *Beitraege*, Vol I, p. 378.

⁹⁶ s *Beitraege*, Vol I, p. 385

eight o'clock in the evening. We were crowded together in railway-trucks, which were not heated. There were sixty-eight persons in the truck that I was in, and in some of the trucks there were over a hundred. Before I climbed into the truck Polish militia guards stopped me and robbed me of all my possessions. They were still searching my pockets when the train set off, and I only just managed to jump onto the steps of the brake-van in time, otherwise I should have been left behind. Incidentally, I spent the first stage of the journey standing on the brake-van steps. Throughout the whole of the journey the Poles continued to rob the expellees on the train, both during the day and by night. I saw one Pole hit the Mother Superior of the Order of the Gray Sisters of Saint Elisabeth in the face because she refused to give him the only suitcase she had.

It took us four days and four nights to reach the railway-bridge across the Lusatian Neisse. When we did eventually get there, the Poles made us all get out of the train and cross the bridge on foot in order to reach the town of Forst in the Russian Zone. Before crossing the bridge some of the men and women were actually robbed of their shoes by the Poles, and several of us had our suitcases snatched from us. When we arrived at Forst at three o'clock in the afternoon, on January 22nd, 1946, the Russians refused to let us enter the town and tried to make us turn back. It was not until eight o'clock in the evening that they finally allowed us to seek shelter from the cold.

Seven expellees died during the train-journey, and a number of clergymen, including the Reverend Steinhauß, the Reverend Kresse, and Mr. Hermann, died soon after arriving in Forst. Three old people, who had not sufficient strength to walk to Forst after they got off the train, were shot by the Poles. Eight expellees from Neunz were ordered by the Poles to dig a grave for the three old people, and were actually told to shoot the latter, but they refused to do so.⁹⁷

Soon after my expulsion my parishioners were also expelled, namely on February 7th, 1946, in the early hours of the morning. They were only allowed ten minutes' time to gather their belongings together. All artisans and persons fit to work, in particular young girls, were forced to remain behind in order to work for the Poles, and were all crowded together in one building. The rest of the expellees were taken to the casemates in Neisse, where they were detained for two days and two nights. From there they were then transferred to the barracks in Neisse. The daily food-ration they received consisted of a small piece of bread. Within a very short time twenty-five persons died of hunger-typhus. As they were practically starving, many of the expellees fled and sought shelter with various German families in Neisse and nearby. In June, 1946, they were then expelled from Silesia together with these families.

⁹⁷ Cf. Report No. 63.

*Report No. 67***The Parish of Oppersdorf, near Neisse, Upper Silesia**⁹⁸

The parish of Oppersdorf included 705 Catholics (1942) and 10 persons of other denominations (1929). The church (St Nicholas') is mentioned in historical records in 1305, whilst the choir of the present church is mentioned as early as 1250. The west tower was built about the year 1600. Until 1810 Oppersdorf belonged to the primates of Breslau.

... About the middle of March the situation became more dangerous from day to day, and on March 16th, 1945, the first trek from our village left for Ziegenhals-Freiwaldau. As a result of orders we received from a German tank battalion and as we had heard of the dreadful atrocities perpetrated by the Russians in neighbouring villages, we formed a second trek during the night of March 19th, and left the village. Two days later, after an extremely dangerous journey, we crossed the Czech frontier and reached the villages near Freiwaldau. Here we stayed until Whitsun, 1945, living, it is true, under rather primitive conditions, but nevertheless undisturbed. I myself found accommodation in Sandhuebel, which is near Freiwaldau. After we had been robbed of all our possessions by the Poles at the frontier, we eventually reached Oppersdorf again on Trinity Sunday (June 3rd, 1945), only to discover that about half the village had been demolished. Soon after our return the Poles arrived, and we were subjected to all kinds of hardships and forced to live under most primitive conditions. Despite this fact, however, the parish-priest held divine service regularly for both the Germans and the Poles after the German inhabitants had repaired the badly damaged church as best as they could ...

... Soon afterwards a serious epidemic of hunger-typhus broke out and many of the inhabitants died. An emergency hospital was set up at the inn, and here some of the nuns of our order undertook the heavy task of looking after the sick. The nuns were constantly molested at all hours of the day and also during the night by Russian patrols, and were even raped whilst tending the sick and the dying. Several of the nuns died of exhaustion. Meanwhile, dreadful atrocities had been perpetrated in Oppersdorf by the Poles. After ill-treating and tormenting the few remaining farmers and their families in Oppersdorf, who had been made to work like slaves, in a most brutal manner, the Polish militia finally turned them out of the village on January 11th, 1946, in the middle of winter. They were taken to a neighbouring village, where they were crowded together with persons from other villages in an inn. There were about seven hundred of them altogether, and they were left to starve to death. Not one of them, however, opted for Poland in order to make things easier for themselves. For this reason they were all put into cattle-trucks, even the women and children, and despite the fact that it was winter and the temperature was at zero, they were kept locked up in the cattle-trucks and conveyed backwards and forwards between Neisse and Sagan for about twenty days. Needless to say, many of them died of starvation and exposure.

⁹⁸ s. *Beitraege*, Vol. II, p. 747.

*Report No. 68***The Parish of Patschkau, near Neisse, Upper Silesia**⁹⁹

The parish of Patschkau included 7,000 Catholics (1942) and 643 persons of other denominations (1929). The church (St John the Evangelist's) is mentioned in historical records in 1285. The present church was consecrated in 1389, and was renovated to a considerable extent in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (Gothic and baroque additions). Until 1810 Patschkau belonged to the primates of Breslau. The former Church of St Nicholas' is mentioned in historical records as early as 1473.

... On the morning of March 20th, 1945, the town was attacked twice by enemy planes. A large number of army lorries had been parked on the square in front of the parish-church and in the courtyard of the District Home for the Aged, and as these lorries had been painted bright yellow they were an easy target for the enemy. All the objections I had previously raised as regards the parking of these lorries at these particular spots had been in vain. Practically all the bombs came down near the church and the home, but fortunately most of them were high explosive bombs. About twenty-five houses, most of them in Konrad Street and Boenisch Street, were razed to the ground; so, too, was the little Church of St. John's in the old churchyard, opposite the parish-church, and the District Home for the Aged. A large number of houses, including the vicarage, were heavily damaged. As regards the parish-church, only one window was smashed. As a result of these two air-raids, during which about thirty persons were killed, the inhabitants fled from the town as fast as they could... I was in Albendorf when the Russians arrived there. Thanks to the fact that they had a very strict commanding officer, the Russians behaved very decently there. On my way back to Patschkau shortly before Whitsuntide, 1945, however, I was held up in Eckersdorf by Russians and was robbed of all my possessions. I arrived back in Patschkau on Whit Saturday, May 19th, 1945. The town had been surrendered to the Russians immediately after the capitulation. The Russian troops had taken possession of the town in a fairly orderly manner, and, a short time afterwards, had then handed over the civil administration to the Poles. The church had in no way been damaged or looted, but the vicarage, on the other hand, was in a dreadful state. After the Russian Occupation, Russian civilians and Ukrainians had moved into the vicarage and had wrought complete havoc there. The contents of all the cupboards and drawers, in particular files and records, were strewn all over the house and were soiled and damaged. As the house had been badly damaged during the air-raids and the roof lifted off by bombs and as a result of the heavy rains we had been having, the whole place resembled dirty swimming-baths. There were only one or two rooms which were habitable. After a short time, however, we managed to repair the doors and windows, and even the roof. The biggest problem was how to repair the windows in the church. In the end, however,

⁹⁹ s. *Beitraege*, Vol. II, p. 755 ff.

we managed to repair them all, partly with glass and partly with wood. The inhabitants of Patschkau did all the repair-work in the town voluntarily and practically for nothing...

The people of Patschkau were turned out of their homes in a most brutal manner, and very often they were not even allowed to take a few of their possessions with them. In those houses in which they were allowed to remain they lived crowded one on top of another. They were forced to work for the Poles but received no pay, and very often not even food. After a little while Polish currency was introduced, but the Germans were given no chance to change their money for Polish money. They were thus obliged to sell what little possessions they still had, in order to avoid complete starvation. In addition to those persons who had formerly been members of the National Socialist Party and had, in some cases, committed political crimes, many innocent persons were also arrested and taken to prison. As a result of the inhuman treatment to which they were subjected many of them died. At night Polish and Russian marauders would enter dwelling-houses and steal all they could find, and rape the girls and the women. And the Germans were obliged to submit to all this since they had no protection whatsoever.

Owing to these unbearable conditions many of the inhabitants of Patschkau left the town. By the time they reached the frontier they had as a rule been deprived of all their possessions and the womenfolk had been raped a number of times. Those of us who remained in Patschkau constantly hovered between fear and hope. On January 16th, 1946, however, my fate was decided. At five o'clock in the afternoon a Polish commission appeared at the house, and told us that we were being expelled from the country and that we had half an hour's time in which to gather our belongings together. — The nuns told us afterwards that they had been searched by women officials in the presence of the Polish militiamen in a most disgusting manner...

In the evening we all left by train for the west. The journey took ninety hours. The train was not heated and the temperature in the coaches, especially at night, was icy as none of the windows could be closed. Shortly before we reached Forst the Poles made us get out of the train. We were searched by the customs-officers, and then the Poles made us cross the railway-bridge across the Neisse on foot. They robbed us and flogged us as we crossed the bridge. Children screamed, grown-ups collapsed, and some of them died and were left lying there on the ground at the end of the bridge. Others fell into the icy waters of the Neisse, but the Poles were indifferent to their fate. They drove us on unmercifully across the bridge, despite the fact that the Russians at the other end refused to allow us to enter Forst. Night had fallen by the time the Russians finally relented. There was no accommodation to be had in Forst, and we were obliged to spend three days and three nights in the cold and draughty booking-hall at the station. We were at the end of our strength...

*Report No. 69***The Parish of Prockendorf, near Neisse, Upper Silesia**¹⁰⁰

The parish of Prockendorf included 480 Catholics (1942) and no persons of any other denomination (1929). A chapel (dedicated to St. Niclaus) was built in 1121. The present church was built in 1767, and the bell-tower in 1828. Prockendorf was originally incorporated with Volkmannsdorf, but became an independent parish on May 6th, 1893.

On March 17th, 1945, Russian tanks, advancing from Volkmannsdorf, entered our peaceful little village. Orders had previously been issued by the district administrative authorities in Neisse that we were to evacuate the village and go to the Sudetenland before the Russians arrived, and these orders were to be carried out at 2 p. m. on March 17th. At 1 p. m., however, the enemy took us by surprise and there was no chance of escape. We consoled ourselves with the thought that the enemy would pass through our village and would not molest us in any way. But our hopes were soon dashed to the ground. After passing through the village the Russians turned off in the direction of Steinau, Upper Silesia, and Prockendorf, at least as long as the town of Neisse was besieged, was part of the fighting sector, and the inhabitants were forced to endure all the hardships and misery of war. On the afternoon of March 17th, the Russians began looting and ransacking all the houses in the village and raping the women and girls. The Russians stole anything they fancied, but the favourite objects were undoubtedly watches and jewelry. It was not long before I, too, like most of the inhabitants of the village, had been deprived of both my watches and an alarm-clock. On the Sunday after the Russians had taken the village no divine service was held, as the villagers were all afraid to venture out of doors. In the meantime German units had advanced towards Prockendorf from the Bischofkoppe, and by the afternoon there was a good deal of shooting going on. The Russians began to retreat, and we, for our part, began to hope that our village would soon be liberated. But, unfortunately, the German units were not strong enough and after a while they were repulsed by the enemy and forced to retreat. Several barns and dwelling-houses at the upper end of the village were destroyed by fire. The school was also burnt down, and the two teachers employed there, a man and a woman, lost all their belongings. On Monday, March 19th, at about eight o'clock in the morning, orders were issued that the upper end of the village was to be evacuated, and the Russians then forced us to crowd together in quarters at the lower end of the village. A time of much suffering and hardship now began. We were molested by the Russians both by day and by night. On the pretext of looking for German soldiers they dragged the girls and women out of the houses and raped them. Every night the poor, defenceless victims could be heard screaming for help. Those of the womenfolk who put up any resistance were either beaten or shot...

¹⁰⁰ s. *Beitraege*, Vol. I, p. 388 ff.

The vicarage was a dreadful sight. Meals for the Russian officers had been cooked in the kitchen, and the yard had been used for slaughtering cattle. Drawers and cupboards had been forced open, and there were records, documents, and clothes strewn about the rooms and the corridors. Vestments had been removed from the cupboards and some of them torn to pieces, and crucifixes and statues had been smashed. Havoc had been wrought in the church. The new tabernacle had been forced open, the ciborium was bent and dented, and the monstrance was found hanging on a garden-fence. What happened to the sacred hosts I do not know. The organ which had been installed as recently as 1940 could no longer be used. Most of the organ-pipes had been removed, and the smaller ones had been used to fasten together the wires leading from the churchyard up to the tower, which had been used as a military look-out. The gilt chandelier had been removed and was later found in the vestry, all bent and damaged. The Russians had actually played football inside the church...

Report No. 70

The Parish of Ritterswalde, near Neisse, Upper Silesia ¹⁰¹

The parish of Ritterswalde included 891 Catholics (1942) and 4 persons of other denominations (1929). The church (St George's) is mentioned in historical records as the parish-church about the year 1305. The present church still has two portals which date from about the year 1300. Later on, Ritterswalde was part of the parish of Oppersdorf. From 1919 until 1921 Ritterswalde was an independent *locum*. On June 1st, 1921, it became a parish. Until 1810 it belonged to the primates of Breslau.

On March 19th, 1945, the Russians arrived in our village. They immediately deprived us of all objects of value and also of any furs we had, but on the whole they treated us quite kindly. Two Russian soldiers then came back again to the chapel, offered us cigarettes, and sat down near to the altar. I remained standing in front of the altar, and we tried to converse with each other in a mixture of Polish, Russian, and German. Suddenly, however, a third Russian appeared in the doorway, caught sight of me, and aimed his revolver at me. One bullet hit me in the lung and the other caught me in the thigh. I collapsed in front of the altar. The other two Russians immediately came to my assistance. Several more Russians appeared and, together with my three German colleagues, they bent over me and endeavoured to help me, as they were all quite convinced that I was about to die. In the evening a Russian officer appeared — I was still lying on the altar-steps — and told me that the Russian soldier who had shot me begged me to forgive him, as he had fired at me by mistake because he had taken the two Russian soldiers who had been with me for German soldiers. I lay on the altar-steps, racked with pain and fever, until Wednesday evening (during the night from Tuesday to Wednesday I was at death's door). In the meantime the fighting had come nearer, and the chapel was now in the

¹⁰¹ s. *Beitraege*, Vol II, p 767 ff

Russian fighting-front. On Wednesday evening we Germans were informed that we must leave. Clad in only my underclothes, a hood, and a cloak, and supported by my servants and colleagues, I trudged the distance of about four and a half miles to Mannsdorf — through the Russian front-lines, then through the forest and via Klein-Wartha. It was in Klein-Wartha that I first received medical attention, and a Russian doctor dressed my wounds. The two armed Russians who accompanied us were allegedly taking us to a hospital, but instead of doing so they handed us over to the OGPU. We spent the night in a stable. The Russians gave us plenty to eat. During the night, however, some soldiers came to fetch my housekeeper. This was our first experience of the brutal manner in which the Russians treated the womenfolk. Next day, that is to say, on the Thursday, we were taken to the house which had formerly belonged to Bokisch, and which was now the OGPU headquarters. Here, we were joined by five other Germans. The Russians interrogated us and when at length they were convinced that we were not spies after all and had not been giving the German troops signals, as had been alleged, they eventually released us on the Saturday, the day before Palm Sunday, and told us we could return to Ritterswalde. The village had meanwhile been captured by the Russians after a combat which had lasted from Wednesday to Friday. On the way back to Ritterswalde we were stopped at least six times by Russians and searched. Night had fallen by the time we eventually reached the village.

The village was indeed a sorry sight. Practically all the houses at the lower end of the village had been destroyed by fire or damaged by shells. We were nearly moved to tears when we saw how badly our beautiful parish-church was damaged. The vestry had been demolished completely, the tower had been split in two, the organ-loft had collapsed, and practically the whole of the roof had been lifted off. The churchyard was a horrible sight. Most of the houses near the church had not been demolished, nor had the upper end of the village suffered such extensive damage as the lower end...

The first thing I did was to make enquiries regarding Lichteblau, my companion in misfortune. He had returned to the village the evening before I did, but after that no one had seen him again. Next morning they found him and old Mr. Goebel shot, lying at the entrance to the farm. Mr. Lichteblau had then been buried at once, and so no one had seen him. May his soul rest in peace. — I also learnt that Farmer Stenzel had been shot by the Russians on March 23rd, on his farm, because he had allegedly ill-treated foreign workers. No one knew where he had been buried. May his soul rest in peace.

Most of the girls in the village were now forced to look after the cattle which had been rounded up and collected from the various farms. All the girls and the women, irrespective of their age, were constantly molested in a most brutal manner by the Russians, and dreadful, unforgettable scenes were enacted. One Thursday evening the commanding officer of the village came along to my house and tried to force a young

woman to go along with him. She had a small child in her arms, and tried to defend herself. The commanding officer, who was completely intoxicated, kept pointing his revolver at her and also at me, because I refused to persuade her to go along with him. Finally, he snatched the child out of her arms — a thing which the Russians, as a rule, did not do — and, dragging the poor, defenceless woman out of the house, proceeded to rape her. This was only one of the many cases which occurred day in day out, night after night...

In June, 1945, the first lot of Poles arrived in Ritterswalde, and a new period of suffering and hardship began for the poor inhabitants. The Germans were turned out of their homes, or else forced to live in tiny attics in their own houses. No consideration whatsoever was shown for children, the sick, and the aged. The first Polish mayor we had endeavoured to avoid inflicting unnecessary hardships on the people, but, unfortunately, he was unable to assert his authority and he was soon removed from office. The Germans were completely at the mercy of the Poles and were thus the defenceless victims of the latter's terrorism, greed, and rapacity. Every day Germans came to me in tears and told me that the Poles had robbed them of all their possessions. With great cunning the Poles managed to find out the secret hiding-places where the Germans had hidden the last of their possessions which the Russians had not robbed them of. Attired in clothes that they had stolen from the Germans, the Poles strutted about the street or stalked proudly into church. They even went so far as to remove the pictures and statues from the church, and also "requisitioned" furniture as they pleased. Conditions became even worse when the so-called "militia" arrived in the village. The Germans were now forced to work like slaves and received no pay for their services. They were even made to work on Sundays. The slightest offence on the part of the Germans resulted in their immediate arrest. They were then taken to the cells at the militia headquarters, imprisoned there, and beaten in a most brutal manner. German girls and women who were arrested by the Poles were not only beaten but also raped...

Report No. 71

The Parish of Volkmannsdorf, near Neisse, Upper Silesia ¹⁰²

The parish of Volkmannsdorf included 1,237 Catholics (1942) and no persons of other denominations (1929). The church (The Holy Nativity) is mentioned in historical records at the beginning of the fourteenth century. The present church was built during the years 1749 to 1754. Until 1810 Volkmannsdorf belonged to the primates of Breslau.

The dreadful catastrophe of the war overwhelmed Volkmannsdorf on March 17th, 1945, when, at noon that day, Russian troops entered the village and occupied it. The women and children were allowed to remain in the village, but were completely at the mercy of the Russians, and

¹⁰² s. *Beitraege*, Vol. I, p. 391.

lived in constant fear and trembling. The menfolk, including the parish-priest, were arrested by the enemy and taken to various internment camps. The parish-priest, together with a group of 150 men, some of whom hailed from villages in the vicinity of Volkmannsdorf, were taken to an estate, which had belonged to a Mr. von Eyke, in Kunert, near Polwitz in the district of Ohlau. Here the parish-priest was given the task of camp-supervisor, and was responsible for the registration, victualling, and supervision of the camp-inmates, who were forced to work on the estate. The priest was also allowed to hold services in one of the cottages on the estate. After numerous experiences, some of which were extremely unpleasant, he was finally released from the camp on June 16th, 1945, the day of his thirtieth anniversary as a priest. On June 18th, 1945, after a wearying journey on foot, he eventually reached Volkmannsdorf once more. A sad change had been wrought there in the meantime. The women, girls, and children had suffered unspeakably. It was a great consolation to them to know that their priest was once more with them. On his return the priest learnt that forty-one persons in the village had lost their lives in a tragic manner during the past three months. Some of them had been shot by the Russians, some had been stabbed, some had been beaten to death or raped, and others had perished in fires. A big memorial service was held at the graves of these war-victims. Soon, the villagers, who had endured so much suffering, began to find consolation, new courage, hope, and faith once more in the divine services which were held.

In the meantime the Poles had begun to settle in Volkmannsdorf, and the inhabitants were subjected to more suffering and hardship. The Poles assured the parish-priest that he and his household would in no way be affected by their measures, but as regards the villagers the Poles behaved like vandals, and looting, ransacking, raping, and the most brutal forms of maltreatment now became the order of the day...

On January 23rd, 1946, the Germans were expelled from Volkmannsdorf by the Poles.

Report No. 72

Tannenberg, near Neisse, Upper Silesia¹⁰³

Tannenberg is part of the parish of Wiesau, near Neisse (see next report), and included 244 Catholics and 3 persons of other denominations (1929)

The village of Tannenberg, near Neisse, and the surrounding countryside had hardly suffered at all from the effects of the war. After the inhabitants had returned to the village from the district of Zwittau in the Sudetenland, whither they had trekked prior to the Russian invasion, they had worked hard and tilled the land. Then one day we were suddenly informed that Silesia, as far as the Neisse, had become Polish territory, but nobody knew which River Neisse was meant. A wave of terrorism began. Marauders

¹⁰³ s *Betraege*, Vol. II, p. 534 ff.

ransacked and looted private dwellings during the day and at night. And we were utterly defenceless.

The so-called mayor of Wiesau, to which district Tannenberg also belonged, on one occasion, when he was drunk, said to a German, "We haven't come to take over the administration, but to take our revenge!" Incidentally, the same mayor was responsible for all the measures which were enforced.

On July 2nd, 1945, at five-thirty in the morning, a Polish militiaman tore into Tannenberg on a motor-cycle and informed the villagers that everyone must be out of the village in half an hour as Tannenberg was to be expropriated! We were told we could only take twenty pounds of luggage with us and also that we should take enough food with us, as we could count on the journey taking a fortnight and we should not be given any food-rations during that time. In the meantime a crowd of about a hundred militiamen, on foot, on horseback, and some of them with dogs, and all armed to the teeth with carbines, revolvers, and pistols, had encircled the village and were now closing in upon us. They then proceeded to enter all the houses. In fear and trembling we hurriedly gathered a few things together, whilst a Polish militiaman stood behind each of us, pointing his revolver at us. The rest of the militiamen were already busy looting. Open vans then drove through the main street and collected the booty, which was taken to the mayor of Wiesau.

We were told to line up on the highway just outside the village. We had to leave our luggage lying there on the road. We were then taken some distance away and were thoroughly searched. The Poles robbed us of anything they found in our possession, swore at us, spat in our faces, and flogged and beat us. Helpless old men who begged the Poles to be merciful were kicked and beaten until they collapsed on the road. Thereupon the Poles dragged them to their feet again and started beating them anew. Those of their relatives who tearfully implored the Poles to stop were horsewhipped across the face by the mayor.

Suddenly, a shot resounded in the village. We learnt later that the son of one of the farmers had hidden in a field and that the Poles had found him and shot him on the spot. They nearly beat his father to death.

The Poles then began to search our luggage. They stole anything of any value and crammed it into their pockets, whilst the female partisans who were with them actually put on the clothes they stole. Eventually our sorry procession was allowed to proceed on its way, after they had given us about two minutes in which to gather our scattered belongings together; a lot of things were left lying on the road as we had no time to pick them up. Polish militiamen on horseback rode at the front and the rear of the procession, and we were guarded on either side by militiamen with dogs. This was the manner in which we proceeded to Ottmachau.

The people in the villages we passed through stood aghast when they saw us and called out to us to ask us what had happened. Thereupon the

Poles belaboured them with blows and us, too, for talking to them. By the time we got to the next village one of the men on horseback had ridden on in advance and driven the people off the streets. They were not even allowed to look out of the windows as we passed by. By noon the heat had become oppressive, but nobody was allowed to give us a sip of water. None of us knew what our fate was to be, but we assumed that the Poles were taking us to the casemates at Glatz. What would happen after that we did not dare think!

When we reached Ottmachau, which had been badly damaged, the Poles allowed us a short rest, but we had to sit in the middle of the street, in the fierce sun, and nobody was allowed to go into the shade. As we sat there, a crowd of Polish settlers came by on carts which were decorated with garlands. When they caught sight of us, they started singing and laughing and jeering at us.

Towards evening we reached Patschkau, and spent the night there in a house which was positively filthy. Next morning we trudged off again in the direction of Reichenstein. Our route now proceeded through mountainous country and we found it hard going, especially as the Poles would not allow us to stop for a little rest now and then. The aged and the sick found it practically impossible to keep up with the trek. Many of us were obliged to abandon our luggage as it was too heavy. On several occasions the Poles made us stop in order to deprive us of anything that caught their fancy.

We had almost reached Heinrichswalde when suddenly the Poles apparently no longer found their task so pleasant. They ordered us to spend the night in Heinrichswalde and to proceed to Glatz on our own next day. And without more ado they suddenly vanished. At that time there were hardly any Poles at all in Heinrichswalde, and the persons in authority were the Russian commanding officer and the German mayor. They gave us permission to remain in the village. We were given ration cards and were sent to help the farmers nearby, and also to work on the big estate in the neighbouring village of Hemmersdorf which had been taken over by the Russians. When we told people about our experiences they refused to believe us, for the simple reason that there were so far no Poles whatsoever in the village. Future events, however, corroborated our statements...

Report No. 73

The Parish of Wiesau, near Neisse, Upper Silesia ¹⁰⁴

The parish of Wiesau included 838 Catholics (1942) and 3 persons of other denominations (1929). The church (St. Catherine's) is mentioned as the parish-church in historical records at the beginning of the fourteenth century. The present church was built at the beginning of the sixteenth century and the tower in 1778. As far as the history of the settlement of the country is concerned, it is interesting to note that the two villages

¹⁰⁴ s. *Bettraege*, Vol. III, pp. 566-567

of Wiesau and Schwandorf, $1\frac{1}{4}$ miles away, and the town of Weidenau, which is the same distance away, most probably correspond to Wiesen, Schwandorf, and Weiden in the Bavarian Upper Palatinate which are also located not far from each other. Wiesau was already part of the parish of Weidenau in 1579. It became an independent parish in 1780. Until 1810 it belonged to the primates of Breslau.

None of the buildings in the parish of Wiesau were damaged in 1945 as the village was about six miles away from the fighting-front at Neisse. It is, however, extremely regrettable that women and girls were raped. The Russians searched the vicarage for firearms and removed all the books from the bookcases and shelves and threw them onto a heap in one of the rooms.

... The Polish militiamen behaved as if they had been officially appointed to execute Polish martial law. Many of them had been employed in Germany as Polish workers during the war and had actually worked in Wiesau and the neighbouring villages. They were thus well-informed as to any valuables the farmers possessed and, in some cases, had helped the latter to hide their possessions before the arrival of the Russians. They now, therefore, looted all these hiding-places. — On one occasion they beat an old farmer of eighty to death because he could not bear to leave his farm and had hidden so as not to be expelled.

Report No. 74

The Parish of Ziegenhals, near Neisse, Upper Silesia¹⁰⁵

The parish of Ziegenhals included 12,420 Catholics (1942) and 635 persons of other denominations (1929). The town of Ziegenhals was founded during the time of Bishop Lorenz of Breslau, soon after the town of Neisse was founded, that is to say soon after 1233. A stone church was built about the same time as the town was founded. This church (St Laurence's) is mentioned in historical records in 1285. The present church was built during the years 1729-1732. The sandstone portal of the old Gothic church has been preserved. It is the oldest Gothic portal in Upper Silesia, and now adorns the front of the present church. During the Hussite Wars the town and the church were partly destroyed by fire. The towers were built in 1907 and the high altar in 1921. The Church of St Rochus was probably built in 1680. Until 1810 Ziegenhals belonged to the primates of Breslau.

From about the beginning of April, 1945, onwards the Russian forces were only about two miles away from the town, namely at Neuwalde and Ludwigsdorf, which were practically razed to the ground. The clergy, the nuns, and about five hundred persons, who were for the most part old or sick, had remained behind in the town. The fact that the Russians had no heavy shells saved the town from destruction. As it was, the damage caused by small shells and bombs was very slight. The church, the monasteries, the vicarage, and St. Francis' Home were un-

¹⁰⁵ s. *Beitraege*, Vol. II, p. 776.

damaged. The Russians entered the town on the day after the capitulation and the first building they occupied was the hospital. Whilst the Russians were in Ziegenhals as many as thirty girls and women would often seek refuge at the vicarage.

... It was a good thing for us that the Russians did not capture Ziegenhals in the course of the fighting, otherwise the same atrocities which occurred in Neustadt and Neisse would have happened here, too. When the Russians entered Ziegenhals they were so elated with their victory and so glad that the war was over that on the whole they behaved fairly decently. There was not much looting, but a few days later, when the inhabitants of the town who had fled to nearby villages began to return, a large number of cases of rape occurred.

On May 15th, the first lot of Poles, most of them administrative officials, and also the new Polish mayor arrived in the town. The mayor was well-disposed towards the Germans, but despite this the German language was very soon prohibited for divine service, even though the number of Germans in the town soon increased to about five thousand. Gradually more and more Poles swarmed into the town. They robbed the Germans of their possessions in a most abominable manner, drove them out of their houses, maltreated them, and put them in prison. The authorities were powerless to stop them, especially as the militiamen, who were supposed to act as police, were the ones who did most looting and committed most of the atrocities.

About the end of 1945 several clergymen were expelled from Ziegenhals. Professor Kresse¹⁰⁶ and the Very Reverend Steinhaut¹⁰⁷ both died on the journey to the Oder-Neisse line.

¹⁰⁶ Counsellor of Board of Education (ret), born 24/12/71, ordained 21/6/97.

¹⁰⁷ Ecclesiastical Counsellor, Leo Steinhaut, archpresbyter (ret) born 20/9/72, ordained 25/6/95.

SECTION IV

Events in Central Silesia¹⁰⁸

- 1) Brieg
- 2) Ohlau
- 3) Gross-Wartenberg
- 4) Militsch
- 5) Guhrau
- 6) Trebnitz
- 7) Wohlau
- 8) Neumarkt
- 9) Strehlen
- 10) Frankenstein
- 11) Reichenbach
- 12) Breslau

*Report No. 75***The Parish of Brieg, administrative district of Breslau¹⁰⁹**

The parish of Brieg included 8,231 Catholics (1942) and 25,850 persons of other denominations (1929). The church (St Nicholas') is mentioned in historical records in 1279. From 1525 onwards this church was Protestant. The present Catholic parish-church (Exaltation of the Cross) was built by the Jesuits during the years 1735 to 1746. The towers were restored in 1856. From 1573 onwards there was a Johannite sinecure in Brieg and a Jesuit college from 1681 to 1801. The collegiate church of St Hedwig's was built some time after 1360. It was destroyed during the siege of 1741, but partly rebuilt again during the years 1783 to 1785. Prior to 1285 there was also a Franciscan monastery in Brieg which existed until 1553. The monastery church of St Peter's and St Paul's later became an armoury. A Dominican monastery existed from 1336 to 1557. A Capuchin monastery was founded in 1683, secularized in 1810, and later became a lunatic asylum. — There was a Catholic curacy attached to the collegiate church from 1677, and also to the Jesuit (Holy Cross) Church from 1801 onwards. The curacy became a parish in 1819.

... My experiences as far as the Polish Catholics and in particular the Polish clergy were concerned tallied with the experiences of other German priests, as we often ascertained when we attended assemblies. On many occasions we felt that the Polish clergymen regarded us not as colleagues of the same profession and as Catholics, but as Germans, and therefore treated us accordingly. One of the Polish gentlemen was

¹⁰⁸ The following reports have been compiled in keeping with the chronological order of events

¹⁰⁹ s. *Beitraege*, Vol I, p. 76 ff

very hostile towards the Germans, and on one occasion he referred to me and one of the other parish-priests as the "Hitler Gang". On the whole, the opinion of the Polish clergy seemed to be that we German Catholics had failed utterly as regards opposition to the Hitler regime. They completely overlooked the fact that we had constantly fought a tedious and dangerous battle against this regime; nor were they willing to acknowledge that German clergymen not only in Brieg but throughout the country had made every endeavour to help the Poles during the National Socialist regime and had constantly been in danger of being arrested by the Gestapo for this reason...

On December 5th, 1945, I was unexpectedly expelled from Brieg, together with all the other Germans living at the vicarage. I was just in the act of leaving the house in order to administer the holy sacrament to a German woman and a Pole who were dying — the Polish curate had been ill in bed for some time — when five Poles suddenly arrived at the vicarage and asked to speak to me. They informed me that I and all the other Germans must be ready to leave the house in twenty minutes' time as we had been expelled. In vain I remonstrated with them. When I asked them to produce a written order of expulsion they refused to do so. Nor would they allow me to visit the two sick persons mentioned above. In the end I had to submit to their authority. The Polish soldiers stood on guard whilst we hurriedly gathered our belongings together. I was not even allowed to take the necessary steps to inform the Polish clergyman. We — my seventy-year old mother, who was greatly upset at all this, an old housekeeper, who had formerly been in service with the last parish-priest, and those of the servants who happened to be in the house at the time — hardly had time to pack a few possessions and some food. One of the Poles stood by, holding a watch in his hand, and kept telling us to hurry up, and twenty minutes had barely elapsed when he actually forced us to leave the house. At the very last moment we were obliged to leave some of the things we had packed behind. During the whole of the time the district of the town in which the vicarage is located had been surrounded by a cordon of armed militiamen. They took us to the market square, which was guarded by Polish militia, various officials in plain clothes, and by Russian sentries. Here I learnt that we were not the only Germans to be expelled but that altogether two thousand, that is to say one-fourth of the number of persons who had returned to Brieg after the capitulation or had remained there, were to leave the town with us. The Poles had begun expelling these persons, all of whom resided either in the west end or the centre of the town, at one o'clock at night. All the Germans who lived in these two districts of the town or happened to be there at the time were seized by the Poles. Many of them had not even had time to gather a few belongings together. Some of them had not even been able to get properly dressed before they were driven out onto the street. The longest time allowed to the Germans for them to pack up their possessions was twenty minutes, but only in a few cases were they

allowed so much time. Much to the embarrassment of many women and girls, the young militamen stood by and watched them get dressed. Many of the expellees were robbed of the possessions they had hastily gathered together, before they even left the house. The Poles even went to the extent of threatening and beating the expellees with the butt-end of their rifles and with whips. Those who suffered most under the expulsion measures were the aged and the sick. They were simply dragged out of bed, despite the fact that some of them were suffering from typhus, and turned out onto the street. Numerous persons were arrested by the Poles as they were just doing their morning-shopping and taken along to the market square, without being allowed to go home and gather their belongings together.

One woman was arrested by the Poles as she was going home after attending mass. She was a teacher at the technical school, known as having been an anti-Nazi, and a trustee of the church and also deputy-secretary of the parish charity institution. When the Poles arrested her she was within a hundred yards of her home, but they would not even let her go into the house to see her father, who was about seventy-five and very ill, and all alone. Incidentally, he died next day. Numerous families and even mothers and small children were separated in a similar way. Young mothers with babies were treated in an abominable manner. One young mother, for instance, was just about to give her baby its bottle when the Polish militia arrived at the house. They would not even let her feed the child, but forced her to leave the house immediately, and it was a long time before she got a chance to give the poor little mite its feed. The Germans were reduced to a state of utter despair by these Polish methods. The treatment to which the Germans were subjected was always the same, irrespective of whether they had been members of the National Socialist Party or had opposed it, or of whether they were Catholics or not. Even those who had been notorious for having objected to National Socialism and its Poland policy were treated in the same brutal manner, solely because they were Germans. Whilst the group of expellees to which I belonged was standing on the market square and wondering what was going to happen to us — the Poles had not told us where they were taking us — one of the Polish priests from a neighbouring town asked to speak to me. He was only a couple of yards from me, but the Poles refused to allow him to talk to me.

After we had stood about on the market square for some time Polish militiamen, armed with firearms and horsewhips, took us to the station and there pushed us into cattle-trucks, some of which were already occupied by the first lot of expellees, who had spent the night there. Most of the trucks were overcrowded. In the truck that I was in, which would normally have accommodated about thirty persons, there were at first eighty-one persons. There was no straw on the floor, no seating accommodation, and no heating. As the train was standing on a track leading eastwards we were at first afraid lest they might be taking us to a Polish camp, or to Poland or Russia.

We eventually reached the frontier near Forst in Lusatia at noon on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. Many aged and sick had died in the train in the course of our journey from Brieg. The worst part of the whole journey, however, was still to come. Shortly before reaching the frontier-bridge the Poles made us get out of the train. Despite the fact that it was bitterly cold and snowing heavily, they made us walk as far as the customs-house. Many of the expellees collapsed on the way there, as a result of all they had endured, — hunger, cold, and exhaustion. When we reached the customs-house we were obliged to stand out in the open whilst they searched us. The frontier-police brutally refused to listen to me when I begged them to let those of the expellees who were on the verge of collapse go inside and rest for a moment or two. In fact, they would not even allow the poor exhausted creatures to sit down in the open for a moment or two. Both my mother and I were searched in a most abominable and hostile manner. My mother was searched from top to toe by young militiamen, whilst I was searched by the commanding officer, a captain of the militia, who threatened me with his whip. He deprived the two of us of three thousand Reichsmarks, some food, and also some underwear. Part of the money was our own personal property and some of it belonged to charity funds, but the commanding officer made me sign a receipt to the effect that I had only handed over the sum of one thousand Reichsmarks to him. Incidentally, they did not search everyone in this manner. After waiting about in the cold for hours, the expellees were then forced to cross the railway-bridge on foot in order to reach the western bank of the River Neisse. As they crossed the bridge many of them were then robbed of the few possessions they had left, of their coats and shoes, by Polish militiamen. Night had fallen by the time the last of the expellees arrived at the collecting point on the German side of the river.

At noon next day, a bitter cold Sunday, just as we were all about to leave by train on the rest of our journey, a woman who was one of my parishioners came to me in tears and begged me to help her. She told me that her eighty-year old father, who was partly paralysed and had been dragged out of bed by the Poles in Brieg, had collapsed on the railway-lines on the Polish side of the frontier on the previous day. None of the Germans had been able to help because the Poles had refused to let them stop, and the Poles, of course, had not dreamt of rendering any assistance. She had spent the night out in the open, in the icy cold, together with her father, and had kept shouting for help, but no one had appeared. In the morning the Polish frontier guards had allowed her to cross the bridge, and she had spent the whole morning trying to persuade various officials — the police, fire-brigade, railway officials, ambulance-men, and the men at the Russian commandant's office — to help her to carry her father across the bridge to the German side of the frontier. All her efforts had, however, been in vain, and all the persons she had appealed to for help had told her that the Poles would not let anyone, either Russians or Germans, cross the bridge without a permit

and would promptly shoot or arrest anyone who attempted to cross without a permit. Time was too short for her to obtain such a permit, and so finally, in her despair, she turned to me for help. It was with some difficulty that I eventually managed to find one other man among all the expellees who was willing to assist me in this dangerous task, and together we set out to carry the old man across the bridge. Fortunately, all went well, but the scene which met our eyes as we crossed the bridge and walked along the railway-lines filled us with horror. From the end of the bridge to the spot where we found the old man, who fortunately was still alive, we saw three corpses lying on the railway-lines at intervals of about fifty yards. They were the bodies of two men and a woman who had been on our train from Brieg to the frontier. They had collapsed whilst crossing the bridge and had no doubt then died of exposure. Probably there were many others, too, beyond the spot where we found the old man. The Polish guards who escorted us across the bridge ordered us to remove the woman's body from the railway-lines and put it by the side of the embankment. As it was impossible to verify the statements made by many of the expellees, I do not know exactly how many other dreadful tragedies were enacted on the bridge, which came to be referred to as the Bridge of Death by all those who were obliged to cross it. It was a long time before any of us could overcome our feeling of horror at what had happened there on the feast of Our Blessed Virgin.

Report No. 76

Buchitz, near Brieg¹¹⁰

Buchitz is part of the parish of Lossen, near Brieg, and included 50 Catholics and 268 persons of other denominations (1929). The church in Buchitz (Holy Trinity) is mentioned in historical records in 1310 as the parish-church. The present church dates from the late Middle Ages and, together with the chapel of ease at Rosenthal, belonged to the sinecure of the Order of the Knights of Malta at Lossen until 1810. The church in Rosenthal is mentioned in historical records in 1310. The present church (St. Nicholas') was built during the years 1709 to 1711, and has been used for divine service by the Protestants since 1813.

The two chapels of ease in Rosenthal and Buchitz were a dreadful sight; the Mater adjuncta¹¹¹ at Buchitz, situated on the main road from Berlin to Cracow, had suffered most. We were surprised that it had not been destroyed by fire as there was some very heavy artillery fighting in this area. For quite a considerable time it was used by the Russians as a field-hospital. All the pews, the altar, and the beautifully carved pulpit, which dated from the late baroque period, were removed and either smashed to pieces or used as firewood. The bell suddenly disappeared after the Poles had taken over. The interior of the chapel was in a state of utter confusion and disorder until the Germans set about the task of

¹¹⁰ s. *Beitraege*, Vol II, p. 184.

¹¹¹ Chapel of ease.

cleaning and tidying it up. Mrs. Rother, who for years very kindly looked after the little chapel at Buchitz, managed to save the vestments...

The interior of the chapel of ease at Rosenthal was for the most part undamaged. Farmer Hennek of Rosenthal, one of the church elders, who remained in Rosenthal when the Russians captured the village, tidied up inside the chapel. Everything in the vestry, however, had been torn to shreds. The roof was damaged in various places, but Farmer Hennek repaired it...

Report No. 77

The Parish of Loewen, near Brieg¹¹²

The parish of Loewen included 1,761 Catholics (1942) and 3,841 persons of other denominations (1929). A parish-church (The Assumption of the Virgin Mary) is mentioned in historical records in 1312. Since 1534 this church has been Protestant, and the Catholics in Loewen have used the church in Schurgast. Loewen became a parish on April 7, 1866. The present church was built in 1903.

After fierce combats the Russians succeeded in effecting a breakthrough over the Neisse, and on February 5th, 1945, at about ten o'clock in the morning, they entered the town of Loewen. Some of the Russian troops marched through the town and then proceeded in the direction of Michellau and, after erecting a temporary bridge, also in the direction of Falkenberg in Upper Silesia. Very soon one or two and then more Russian soldiers came to the vicarage in order to search the house and also to demand food and drink...

Most of the widows and women in Loewen, who had no menfolk to protect them, sought refuge at the vicarage and St. Joseph's Convent. About thirty persons found shelter at the vicarage. The fighting troops that passed through the town behaved fairly humanely, but the behaviour of the hordes which followed was utterly inhuman, in fact, nothing less than barbarous. Women and girls, and even the nuns at St. Joseph's Convent were raped and tortured in a diabolical manner...

About twenty persons were shot by drunken soldiers. The casualties included Mrs. Klamert, the baker's wife, and her fourteen-year old son, Rupert, Mrs. Kukok, a widow, and Mr. and Mrs. Wolf and their children. Miss Pautke, who had been bedridden for ten years, and the women who had sought shelter at her house were brought to the vicarage when her house was destroyed by fire.

Even during the night the Russians raided the houses, robbed the inhabitants, and raped the womenfolk.

... On Maundy Thursday, March 29th, 1945, most of the inhabitants were allowed to return to Loewen. The trek set off at eight o'clock in the morning and we reached Loewen at noon. Only a few persons received

¹¹² s. *Beitraege*, Vol I, p. 108, and Vol. II, p. 191.

permission from the Russian commanding officer to return to their homes; the rest of them, including the nuns, were obliged to take up their quarters at the "Hopfenberg"... The vicarage was a dreadful sight. Files and records had been strewn all over the rooms, the corridors, and the stairs. The whole place was in a state of utter confusion. Cupboards and drawers had been forced open and the contents stolen. It took me a fortnight to tidy up the living-room and the study. The monstrance dating from the year 1854 and one of the chalices had been smashed. The monstrance which had been made by hand in 1937 of material that had been collected was badly damaged. The maid found the lunula in the yard a fortnight later. One of the chalices had been stolen. The interior of the church had been used as a stable. There was horse-dung all over the floor and the whole place had been partitioned off into stalls for the horses. It took us a fortnight to clean the church. There was a crowbar lying on the high altar, but fortunately the Russians had failed to open the tabernacle with it. The vestry had been looted. All the cupboards and drawers had been forced open and emptied. All the vestments had been scattered on the floor. The sacred linen, some of the surplices, and the entire stock of candles had been stolen. The organ-loft had also been ransacked, and some of the organ-pipes had been removed, but the organ could, nevertheless, still be used...

The first Polish mayor we had, who was a teacher by profession, was well-disposed towards the Germans. At a mass-meeting, which all the men of the town attended, he stressed this fact and said he hoped that the Poles and the Germans would live in peace and friendship and co-operate in the task of rebuilding the town. He added that he had come to Loewen not as an enemy, but as a friend of the Germans. This friendly attitude towards the Germans on his part was taken very much amiss by most of the Poles, who were bent on making the Germans suffer. At the beginning of August the mayor was obliged to leave the town under cover of darkness because he was afraid of what his own fellow-countrymen might do to him. The man who took his place was a radical who called the Germans all the evil names he could think of and made them work like slaves without giving them any food-rations. When he assumed office as the mayor he made a speech from the balcony of the townhall and, addressing the Germans who were assembled down below on the square in front of the townhall, said, "You German swine are going to have to work till you drop and, if I can help it, you won't get anything to eat." As long as there was a Russian commanding officer in Loewen the Germans appealed to him to protect and help them, which he did. It happened quite frequently, for instance, that the Russians helped Germans who had been turned out of their homes by the Poles to move into their houses again. One could hardly talk of administration as far as the Poles were concerned. All they did was not administer, but terrorize the Germans. One Polish mayor was continually being succeeded by the next, and the salaries paid to the town administrative officials were so meagre that the latter were obliged to resort to other

means of earning a living. This the Poles did by searching German houses and removing clothing, linen, and various household possessions and then selling these goods for money or else bartering them for food. They undoubtedly earned more in this way than they did for their work at the Polish administrative offices. One fine day at the end of 1945 a Polish Revenue Office was established in Loewen, and orders were issued that every German had to pay a tax of 25 to 40 zloty per month for every room he or his family occupied. In order to be able to pay this tax the Germans were obliged to sell their last possessions at whatever price was offered them. When the Revenue Office had collected sufficient money the gentlemen-collectors suddenly vanished, taking all the funds with them! The head of the Revenue Office was arrested and sentenced to prison, but after serving his sentence he reappeared in the town just as if nothing had happened and resumed his former post. This time, however, he was not so successful, for the Germans had no intention of paying any more taxes, and, in any case, they no longer knew where to find the necessary money to do so. The "Revenue Office" then started collecting taxes from the Poles, including a tax on furniture which had been stolen from Germans. How successful these measures were I do not, however, know...

Report No. 78

The Parish of Lossen, near Brieg¹¹³

The parish of Lossen included 992 Catholics (1942) and 5,085 persons of other denominations (1929). A chapel (St John the Baptist's) is mentioned in historical records in 1255. The present church was built in 1728. The sinecure of the Order of the Knights of Malta at Lossen was secularized in 1810 and presented to Count Yorck as a gift in 1814.

On January 20th, 1945, at dead of night, when the thunder of the Russian cannon could already be heard in the distance, we took all the gold and silver valuables belonging to the church to pieces and dipped them in wax. All the valuable antique candelabra, statues, sacramental wine, and candles were then stowed in large packing-cases and these we buried in the churchyard. We covered the mound with wreaths and ever-green sprays to make it look like a grave. The Russians failed to discover this hiding-place...

When we returned to Lossen on June 23rd, 1945, we found the atmosphere there one of despair. A number of the Catholic parishioners who had remained behind had been abducted, and most of the girls and the women had been raped and mishandled. All the inhabitants had been robbed time and time again. After all their dreadful experiences they most of them vowed that they would never remain behind again if they knew the Russians were coming. The inhabitants of Lossen were now obliged to do forced labour for the Russians and the Poles. Looting and

¹¹³ s. *Beutraege*, Vol II, p 181 ff.

ransacking by the Russian units which were constantly passing through the village and also by individual soldiers were the order of the day. People were threatened and ill-treated for no reason whatsoever. Cases of rape were constantly occurring. At night the women and girls lived in fear and trembling of what might happen, and most of them hardly ventured to go to sleep because they had to be on the alert the whole night and ready to climb out of windows or hide, in order to escape from the Russians. For this reason many of them spent the nights out in the open and their health began to suffer as a result. By day the Russians and Poles stood over them, threatening them with their rifles, and forced them to do the heaviest kind of work under impossible conditions... In addition to all this misery — starvation, disease, and atrocities — the Germans were completely defenceless and, to make matters even worse, had no legal rights whatsoever. They were completely at the mercy of the so-called Polish militia who simply acted as they saw fit. The Germans were, moreover, cut off from the rest of the world. All these unbearable conditions resulted in most of them being on the verge of a nervous collapse...

Upon my return to Lossen I found that the vicarage and the churches were for the most part undamaged as far as the exterior was concerned. The vicarage had, however, been thoroughly ransacked. Most of the furniture had either vanished or been damaged. The windows had all been smashed, and the locks on the doors had all been broken. There was a pile of filth and rubbish (about 2 ft. high) both upstairs and downstairs, from which I later managed to retrieve some of the church records and books, etc. Practically all the parish files had been thrown out of the windows and had been left lying in the yard so long that most of them had begun to rot. The parish-records which we had previously removed to the cellar for safety had been scattered about the floor, but hardly any of them were missing...

Havoc had also been wrought inside the beautiful church of the Order of the Knights of Malta, but I gave thanks to God that the building had not been demolished. In the interior some of the carvings had been wilfully damaged and all the altar-cloths and the carpets had been removed. Nothing else had been damaged, which was rather surprising after what we had seen elsewhere. The vestry, however, was in a state of complete disorder. Most of the surplices had been soiled and damaged. The sacred linen was torn and filthy and had been scattered about the floor. The sacred vessels had also been strewn on the floor. Nevertheless, we were glad to find so many things still there. And during the weeks that followed, the parishioners tidied up and cleaned the church and repaired the damage. Some things, as for instance the chasubles, had been damaged beyond repair. The choir had been hit by a shell, and as a result the statues and the library belonging to Professor Hermann Hoffmann of Breslau, which had been stored in the church for safety, were very badly damaged. The tower had also been badly smashed by a shell. Most of the beams had been broken and there

were several large holes in the brickwork, so that the spire was in danger of collapsing if exposed to the effects of rains and storms for too long a time. For this reason a number of men of the parish, who were eventually exempted from doing forced labour at the request of the priest, undertook the dangerous task of repairing the steeple, at the end of 1945. At great personal risk to themselves they did this work voluntarily and without receiving any pay. It was touching to see the joy of the parishioners when their parish-church had been repaired. It was once again proof of the fact that in these sad and troublesome times everyone regarded the church as a refuge and as the symbol of their native country, town, or village...

This report is only intended as a brief account of the indescribable hardships and sufferings our people were forced to endure from 1945 onwards until they were expelled from the country in August, 1946. The fortitude and courage with which so many faithful Catholics strove to keep God's laws despite the fact that they were persecuted even more for this very reason, — beaten, forced to work under unbearable conditions, robbed, and reduced to starvation, — was truly affecting and amazing. In their distress and need their faith in God gave them strength to endure all the ignominy they were subjected to. It was therefore hardly surprising that the number of persons who now attended divine service was considerably greater than in former times, and the same applied to the number of persons who now took Holy Communion. For the same reason men and women busied themselves to an ever-increasing degree with religious matters and problems. It was touching to see the spirit of selflessness and kindness which moved them to help each other and the example they set each other by their courage, their faith, and their self-sacrifice. It was a matter of course that those who were robbed of their possessions were helped in their need by those who were in need themselves. Children whose parents had died were adopted and cared for by families who themselves hardly knew where the next meal was coming from. At great risk to themselves people appealed to the authorities to release those innocent persons who had been imprisoned or sentenced, and helped those in danger to escape. Regardless of the risk of contagion people nursed those who were sick, buried the dead in a fitting manner, and placed flowers on the graves. And these services were not only rendered the dead of the parish but also all those unknown persons who died in Lossen.

It would need the talent of a gifted writer to describe all the deeds of heroism and self-sacrifice. The spirit of Christianity was manifested in so many different ways by young and old, by men and women alike, and it is to be hoped that the children who witnessed all this will retain a lasting impression of it. Some of the Poles, too, were wonderfully kind to the Germans and thus overcame the feeling of national differences which had, in many cases, been fostered on both sides. May God forgive the evil and cruel crimes that were committed and judge mankind by all the good and noble deeds that were done.

The greatest service to the inhabitants was no doubt rendered by the four Sisters of Saint Mary who took in the aged and looked after them at the convent, and also visited the sick. The nuns were completely dependent on the charity of the population which was in such great need itself. The convent was constantly crowded with persons who were old and helpless, and it was truly a miracle that the nuns always managed to feed and clothe them all. Sometimes there was hardly enough food in the house for the next meal and the Mother Superior would be greatly worried. But at the last moment, as if by a miracle, there was always sufficient food for everyone. Perhaps it was because the nuns so generously gave of their small supplies to all those homeless persons who passed through Lossen and to all who were in need. In like manner the sick persons who came to the convent every day as out-patients received free medical treatment. In many cases the nuns were obliged to perform operations since there was no doctor available and it was often a case of life and death. But strange to say, the nuns effected miraculous cures, despite the fact that every kind of sickness and disease was rendered more complicated as a result of the dreadful living conditions and above all by starvation... Typhus, for instance, was very often not recognized in the early stages because the symptoms varied. Some cases, too, were quite abnormal. Various skin-diseases also began to spread to an ever-increasing degree. We called them 'Asiatic Itch', and treatment was lengthy and tedious. Most of us contracted these diseases, of which we had never even heard in former times. The typhus epidemic continued to spread and claimed many victims throughout the whole district. Of the 770 Germans who returned to Lossen after the Russian Occupation more than a hundred died during the second half of 1945. It was not until the beginning of 1946 that the epidemic abated somewhat. People then began to suffer from all kinds of strange ulcers, and crowds went to the convent every day to get medical treatment there.

Report No. 79

The Parish of Hennersdorf, near Ohlau¹¹⁴

The parish of Hennersdorf included 1,085 Catholics (1942) and 355 persons of other denominations (1929). A church (St Mary Magdalene's) was built about 1250. The present church probably dates from the sixteenth century. It was rebuilt in 1755 in the baroque style. Until 1810 the parish of Hennersdorf belonged to the Breslau cathedral-chapter.

... During divine service on Sunday, January 28th, 1945, the church was shelled by the Russians.

Two hours later Russian troops entered the village. They raided all the houses. Russian officers forced their way into the vicarage and got drunk on the sacramental wine. In the middle of the night they entered

¹¹⁴ s. *Beitraege*, Vol I, p 100 ff, p 188 ff

the housekeeper's bedroom and molested her. They then fired several shots which went through the window and the door of the priest's bedroom. The priest and the housekeeper eventually managed to escape from the house by climbing out of a window. When all was quiet again the priest went to the convent to see if he could be of any assistance to the nuns there, who were terrified of what the Russians might do. Russian soldiers actually forced their way into the convent later on during the night, and the nuns were obliged to flee. Some of them came to the vicarage, and we then kept watch for the rest of the night, in fear and trembling lest the Russians might raid the vicarage again. At six o'clock in the morning another lot of Russian marauders arrived in the village. About ten of them came to the vicarage, stole the sacramental wine and all the food-supplies, locked the priest up in one of the cellars, and wrought havoc in the house in the meantime. They scattered the chalices and surplices, the kitchen utensils and clothes all over the rooms, and wrought such confusion and disorder that the house was not fit for human habitation by the time they had finished. There was nothing the priest could do when they finally let him out of the cellar but return to the house for his prayer-book and then seek accommodation with the head-master of the village-school. In the course of the day his housekeeper joined him there.

On the afternoon of the same day we went along to the vicarage in order to get some of our clothes and some bedding, as the teacher had offered to put us up for the night in a small room, which was also occupied by him and his family. At five o'clock on the same afternoon we were horrified to see that the vicarage was on fire. The Russians had set fire to it with petrol, and very soon the entire possessions of the priest and his housekeeper, the parochial register, the vestments, the baldachin, and the manger were burnt to ashes. The only parts of the house which were not destroyed were the foundation walls and the chimneys. The barn adjoining the vicarage had been hit by a shell a short time before, and the Russians had stolen all the livestock belonging to the vicarage and eaten it.

Most of the men of the village were arrested and abducted. Linus Halwig, the saddler, and Alfons Ludwig, the baker, were shot in the presence of their families.

Meanwhile, the Russians continued to torture the womenfolk. Mothers were raped in the presence of their children, and the Russians did not even spare women who were eighty years old. A number of women contracted diseases of which they later died. Within three months about forty persons died. In addition to the men who were abducted — Josef Horn, the teacher, was one of them, and he is said to have died on the journey — seventeen girls of the village were also abducted and taken to Siberia. According to a letter written by a woman who returned from Russia, the girls were subjected to inhuman treatment. Three of them died of exhaustion, three of them returned home ill, whilst the rest of them are still (1947) in Russia, enduring the most dreadful hardships.

The Church of St. Mary Magdalene's was fortunately damaged only slightly. The doors had been broken open, but they were soon repaired. About four weeks after the Russian invasion, however, the church was no longer fit to be used for divine service. All the candles had been stolen, the tabernacle had been broken open, the sacred vessels had either been removed or damaged, all the albs had been stolen, the vestments had been trampled on, the chancel, the altar, and the confessional had been soiled with human excrements, the organ had been badly damaged, and the organ-pipes had been removed. It was heartbreaking to see the havoc that had been wrought. After the difficult task of cleaning the church and repairing the altars had finally been completed, Holy Mass was celebrated again for the first time on the fourth Sunday in Lent (February 25th, 1945). The four nuns in Hennersdorf, who lived in a cellar for three months, were fortunately not molested by the Russians. They very kindly undertook the task of looking after the church.

Most of the Germans sought refuge at the various farms in the district and took up their quarters there together. At one of the farms there were thirty-eight persons all crowded together in one of the cellars, used to store potatoes. Here, too, the parish-priest took up his quarters. He had previously been arrested at the convent together with the headmaster of the village-school, but was later released. The headmaster, Mr. Alfred Wick, however, was abducted and taken to Russia.

The village of Hennersdorf was terrorized by the Russians until May 9th. All the livestock was confiscated. On March 13th, 1945, the Russians abducted the parish-priest and took him to the fighting zone, where he was forced to take part in the combats which were fought in the sector located between Grottkau and Neisse. On March 19th, the Labour Exchange at Muehle hired him out as a labourer and he was forced to do heavy work which was quite beyond his strength.

Shortly before the capitulation two drunken Russians suddenly appeared in the room of the parish-priest (at Pawelke's inn), and hit him on the head with their rifles. They also beat him with a cudgel and broke his right arm. It was about three months before he was able to use his arm at all.

A new era in the history of the village began with the arrival of the Poles. At first they were fairly peaceful and quiet, but gradually they became more and more aggressive. They took up their quarters at the various inns, turned the Germans out of their homes and made them live in attics, stole whatever they set eyes on, confiscated the supplies which had been stored from the harvests of the past two years, stole furniture, sewing-machines, and musical instruments, appropriated all the hens and all the rabbits, and reduced the Germans to pauperism, and treated them like slaves. The Russians had at least given the Germans something to eat, but the Poles practically let them starve. Very few of them evinced any fellow-feeling whatsoever as far as the Germans were concerned. And the Polish militia behaved even worse than the Russians. Germans

were thrown into prison and beaten to death. Attired in nothing but their shirts, they were locked up in dark cells in the middle of winter. The Poles constantly raided German houses and stole the only garments that the owners possessed, their shirts, their furniture, and their bedding. Those of the Germans who ventured to object were beaten and flogged in a diabolical manner. On May 13th, 1946, the priest, who had previously been robbed of all his possessions, was suddenly arrested and taken to the prison at Brieg. He was accused of having made false statements, and was sentenced to four months imprisonment and a fine of 5,000 zloty. No clergymen whatsoever were allowed to visit the prisoners; the prison-chapel had been turned into a workshop, and the altar had been smashed. People died and were buried without a priest being allowed to read the burial service. The Germans were beaten and flogged and treated in a most brutal manner.

Report No. 80

The Parish of Kresseheim (Niefnig), near Ohlau ¹¹⁵

The parish of Kresseheim included 563 Catholics (1942) and 614 persons of other denominations (1929). The church (Sacred Heart of Jesus) was built in 1893, whilst the parish was founded on February 13, 1891. Prior to that date Kresseheim had been part of the parish of Hennersdorf.

Between May 18th and May 23rd, 1945, the inhabitants of Kresseheim who had been evacuated to the mountainous districts of Silesia returned to the village. As they approached the village they were extremely happy to see that the church and the houses in Kresseheim had not suffered any damage. Their joy, however, turned to dismay when, upon arriving in the village, they discovered that of the four men who had remained behind there were only two left. The two cowherds were missing. Their dismay increased when they saw how much damage the village had actually suffered. Three houses and two barns had been destroyed by fire. Corpses of German soldiers and carcasses of cattle, which had either died or been killed, lay strewn about in the street. Havoc had been wrought in the dwelling-houses. The church and the vicarage were in an indescribable condition. Twelve cartloads of horse-manure were removed from these two buildings alone. The two old men who had remained behind told us that the Russians had used the church as a depot and as a stables. The mechanism of the organ had been badly damaged, all the metal organ-pipes had been removed, and either trampled on or scattered about the building and in the open. Some of the children of the village managed to find them, but after they had collected them and taken them to the church some Russian soldiers came along and removed them again, and that was the last we saw of them. The sacred vessels, which had been stored in a safe at the vicarage, had been damaged considerably as the safe had been forced open. Parts of

¹¹⁵ s. *Beitraege*, Vol I, p. 114 ff.

the chalices were found in adjoining gardens. The village blacksmith managed to piece parts of the monstrance together again so that it could be used. All the doors in the church, including the vestry-door and the door leading to the organ-loft, and all the doors in the vicarage had been removed. Both the vestries had been looted and ransacked. There was not a cupboard or a drawer which was not damaged. The vestments and all the sacred linen had been removed and scattered all over the place and trampled on. Some of the things were found near the church. After they had been cleaned, a white, a purple, and a black chasuble could be used again. None of the five copes, however, were ever found again. We learnt later that Russian soldiers had been seen using them as horse-cloths as they rode through the village. The tabernacle on the high altar had been damaged, the ostensory had been forced open, the altar-steps had been smashed, and the altar-slabs removed. The slabs of the two side-altars had also been removed. The altar wainscoting had been damaged, all the crucifixes and candelabra had been smashed, all the windows were riddled with holes which had been made by bullets, two rows of pews had been torn out of the floor, and the chandelier over the pulpit, and also the font had been removed.

On May 31st, the Sunday after Corpus Christi, the priest was, however, able to celebrate Holy Mass in the parish-church once more. The altar-slabs were lent us by the parish-church at Hennersdorf, one of the patens had not been damaged, a chalice was made out of parts of the candelabra that had been damaged, and a wine-glass was used as a ciborium.

The villagers also got to work and cleared up the debris in the village and on the various farms. Their first task was to bury all the corpses of German soldiers. The Russian soldiers who had been killed in action had been buried by comrades, but the Russians now made the men of the village exhume them and take the corpses to Ohlau. Only a few of the German soldiers were still wearing their identity disks and most of the bodies could therefore not be identified. The villagers were not allowed to bury them in the village churchyard, but had to inter them at the spot where the bodies were found. The largest grave, which contains twenty-seven bodies, is located in Mrs. Gebel's garden, which adjoins the vicarage-garden on the south side.

On June 13th, Archpresbyter Max Huebner was suddenly taken seriously ill and it was imperative that he should receive medical attention immediately. An Italian woman-doctor living in Ohlau who came to see him diagnosed his illness as twisting of the bowels and gave instructions that he was to be taken to Breslau for an operation. As the Russians had deprived all the farmers in the village of their horses, some of the villagers went to the Polish mayor at Ohlau and begged him to lend them some kind of vehicle in which to take the priest to Breslau. His sole reply to this request was, "Let him croak!" Finally, a Russian officer at the headquarters of the Russian commandant offered to take the priest to Breslau. He was then taken to St. George's Hospital where

German doctors performed the operation, but he died there on July 5th, at the age of sixty-nine. He was buried in Oswitz cemetery. He had been the parish-priest of Niefnig since 1923, and had truly led a saintly life, dwelling alone in his modest little house, studying, suffering, and praying. And perhaps he gazed down from Heaven upon the poor, unhappy souls of his parish, upon his church and the vicarage and protected them, for during the dreadful weeks that followed, when hordes of Russian marauders ransacked all the neighbouring villages, the people of Niefnig were spared...

Report No. 81

The Parish of Thomaskirch, near Ohlau¹¹⁶

The parish of Thomaskirch included 1,304 Catholics and 2,041 persons of other denominations (1929). A chapel (Visitation of Our Lady) is mentioned in historical records in 1224, whilst a parish-church is mentioned soon after 1234. The present church was built in the fourteenth century and the vaulting in the nave about the year 1700. Until 1810 Thomaskirch belonged to the Cistercian Convent at Trebnitz.

... On the afternoon of January 26th, 1945, we trekked as far as Gross-Tinz, despite the fact that it was extremely cold and the temperature at more than four degrees below zero. It was eight o'clock in the evening by the time we got there, and we spent the night there. On the way to Gross-Tinz three small children died of exposure. We buried them in Gross-Tinz...

On Friday, May 18th, 1945, at about six p.m. we once more arrived back in Thomaskirch...

The exterior of the church had not been damaged very much, but the interior was a dreadful sight. Polish and Ukrainian women later told me that the church had been used as a cinema and, prior to that, as a field-hospital.

All the pews had been removed and used as firewood. The new organ had been smashed, and all the crucifixes broken. The statue of Jesus and the altar-piece depicting the Visitation of Our Lady had been damaged by bullets. The tabernacle which I had left open could no longer be used. The manger-statuettes of the three Wise Men had been damaged and their heads and their noses smashed, but the statuettes of the shepherds were practically undamaged. There was a safe in the vestry which had been built into the wall, and in this I had stored the sacred vessels. The Russians had apparently tried to force open the safe with bullets. As this attempt had proved unsuccessful, they had dragged the safe out of the brickwork and had then opened it with the aid of a cutting-torch, and removed the sacred vessels. All the vestments and the

¹¹⁶ s. *Beitraege*, Vol II, p. 204 ff.

sacred linen had likewise disappeared. Some of them were later found under dung-heaps. When, in July, 1945, the Germans were forced to exhume the bodies of Russian soldiers who had been killed in action and had been buried in the churchyard — there were ninety-nine of them, including nine officers one of whom had had the rank of a major — we discovered that a number of them, especially the bodies of the officers, had been wrapped in vestments.

We found one of the tabernacles belonging to the church in the cemetery, and were about to take it back to the church when we discovered that it had been filled with human excrements. We immediately buried it at the spot where we had found it.

The vicarage was a dreadful sight. Practically everything had either been damaged or destroyed by the Russians. All the books, church and parochial records, furniture, linen, and clothes had been thrown out of the windows into the yard and had been left lying there for four months, exposed to snow, rain, and sunshine. Russian tanks and cars had simply driven over them.

During the first weeks after our return to Thomaskirch the priest was obliged to celebrate mass, attired in his soutane, as all the other vestments were missing. As no chalices were available he had to use a wine-glass which he had previously blessed. A priest in one of the villages we trekked through on our return-journey from Czechoslovakia had given him the sacramental wine and wafers...

The young women and girls of Thomaskirch suffered most. So as not to be molested by the Russians most of them were obliged to hide in the cornfields every evening and spend the night out in the open, even when it was raining.

In addition to all these misfortunes, an epidemic of typhus also broke out. Within three months about forty to forty-five Germans, most of them women and girls, died of this disease. During the whole of this time there was no doctor and no dispensary within reach, except at Wansen...

The parish-priest was not molested by the Poles when they took over the administration, but the Germans in Thomaskirch were forced to endure indescribable hardships. Looting and ransacking German houses was the order of the day. Finally, the Poles issued an order that no German was to be allowed to possess anything whatsoever. The Germans were deprived of their fields, their cows and horses, and these were shared out among the Poles. What little possessions the Germans might still have they were either obliged to leave behind when they were expelled from Thomaskirch, or they were deprived of them in the camp at Markstedt. Two-thirds of the population of Thomaskirch were expelled from the village on June 17th, 1945. On June 19th, 1945, the Gray Sisters and the occupants of the vicarage were likewise ordered to leave Thomaskirch. Only a few Germans remained behind and they were forced to work on the land for the Poles. Later, however, they, too, left Thomaskirch...

Report No. 82

The Parish of Kunzendorf, near Gross-Wartenberg ¹¹⁷

The parish of Kunzendorf included 1,403 Catholics (1942) and 2,057 persons of other denominations (1929). Until 1869 Kunzendorf was part of the parish of Schleise. Until 1810 divine service was held at the chapel of the manor belonging to St Matthew's Monastery in Breslau. The vicarage and the church (The Immaculate Conception) were built during the years 1866 to 1868, and on April 24, 1869, Kunzendorf became a parish.

Under the Red Regime. The Bolshevik Invasion on January 21st, 1945

... The first impression we had of the Russians was not exactly very edifying and inspiring. The Russian troops were composed of White Russians, Ukrainians, Siberians, Mongols, Tartars, and apparently of Japanese and Chinese, too. And somehow they seemed to be the personification of the vast, mysterious steppes of Russia. Most of them were of strong and sturdy build. And all of them, as they confronted us, were armed to the teeth — with revolvers and pistols of every type, and some of them even had several, and with rifles, most of which appeared to be old-fashioned types. They were attired in dirty, brownish, padded trousers and jackets, and on their heads they wore fur-caps. They did not appear to have much military discipline. Now and again a so-called commanding officer would appear on the scene, but apparently he was not regarded as a person of authority, for his men simply did as they pleased...

What I heard and saw from behind the curtains of my window was often quite amusing. Russians would be trying to learn how to ride bicycles they had stolen. It was quite amusing to watch them get on a bicycle, fall off, pick themselves up off the ground, and then seize hold of the bicycle, throw it down in a rage, and kick it.

... The nights were worst of all. Scarcely a night passed without Russian marauders creating a disturbance. As soon as it grew dark they began raiding the houses and continued to do so until the morning. Hardly anyone ventured to go to bed. Those who suffered most were the women and the girls. The inhabitants took all kinds of precautions to protect themselves against the Russians, but only God could protect them against these barbarous hordes.

During the long vigils of the night people prayed to God more fervently than ever before, and if they were spared, then it was only because God heard their prayers...

The church was a dreadful sight. The invading Russian troops had broken into the building, and I was horrified when I saw the damage they had done. The building resembled a stable or a closet rather than a church. Straw, horse-dung, and human excrements were scattered

¹¹⁷ s. *Beitraege*, Vol III, p. 659

about the interior in heaps. The following account will serve to indicate the damage that had been done.

The altar: the candelabra lay strewn about on the floor. The Russians had tried to force open the tabernacle but the steel-casing had resisted their efforts. Thereupon they had torn away the wooden boarding at the back of the altar. As all the sacred vessels, the sacramental wine and the holy wafers had previously been removed, there was not much point in their efforts. Boards and plaster lay in a heap at the back of the altar. The carpet covering the altar-steps had been removed, and the steps had been dislodged in the hopes of finding some treasure or other concealed beneath them. The other carpet, which was not a hand-woven one, was later found in the nave. The Russians had used it to sleep on and had apparently forgotten to take it with them when they left. — The vestry: the cupboard in the vestry had been badly damaged and the vestments had been removed and lay scattered about on the vestry-floor or in the rest of the church, in a filthy condition. Indeed, I had my doubts as to how I was ever going to hold divine service again, for the old and the new vestments alike had all been removed and scattered to the winds.

The confessional box was empty. The old confessional chair had been removed, and it was a mystery to me how the Russians had managed to get it through the narrow door and throw it onto the pews. Strange to say, they had not touched the statues of Jesus and the Holy Virgin.

As far as I could ascertain when I inspected the manger near to the side-altar, the only thing that had been removed was the figure of the camel.

The organ had also been damaged. It had only been restored a short time previously. Most of the pipes had been removed, but we found some of them later on, and they were then fitted into the organ again, so that it could be used once more.

The missal was badly damaged. Several pages had been torn out, but it could still be used. When we found it, however, it was covered with human excrements.

The room in which prayer-meetings had been held was in the same state of chaos as the church. It had also been used as a stable, but fortunately most of the benches had not been removed.

One can truly say that the church had become a robbers' den. Stalin's disciples had faithfully observed the principles of Marx and Lenin and had sought to destroy God's works...

A Mass Grave

After I had inspected the church I went to the mass grave which had been dug. Some of the inhabitants of the village were in the act of burying the dead, most of whom had been innocent persons murdered by the Russians. Save in one case, their bodies had not been placed in coffins as there were none available, but had been conveyed to the mass grave on farm-wagons. There were the bodies of the

two men employed on the big estate, who had been shot in the back of the head by the Russians as they walked in front of the latter to show them the way. The Russians had then stuffed German paper-money into the bullet-wounds. There was the body of an eighteen-year old Polish girl, a nice, decent girl, who had been raped in a most brutal manner, and then either beaten to death or shot. Her body was eventually found hidden under a heap of straw, somewhere in the village. It was obvious that she had tried to defend herself otherwise she would not have met with such a dreadful fate. Her poor body was bent and contorted as if with pain, when we buried her...

The body of Farmer W. had been placed in a coffin which his relatives had made themselves. He had always been a decent-living, honest, and hardworking man. He had endeavoured to save his farm from destruction at the hands of the Russians, and this had apparently roused their anger to such an extent that they had shot him in the head as he was returning home to his family in the evening. Among the dead who were buried there were several persons who could not be identified, namely German soldiers who were no longer wearing their identity disks, and also various other persons, about twelve in number. There was also the body of a young Russian of about eighteen, who had died from alcohol poisoning.

The bodies were placed one on top of the other in the huge grave, and the inhabitants of the village wept as the priest said a last prayer and a blessing. The villagers later tended the grave and set up a wooden cross and placed flowers on it. May God be merciful to the dead and may their souls rest in peace.

... One day the Polish parish-priest at Tremb came to see me in order to ask my advice. "What am I to do?" he said. "I have been told to hold a service to celebrate the victory of the Russians, and they expect me to praise the Russians. I don't know what to do in the matter." It was impossible for me to give him any advice, for the final decision rested with him. And his decision might cost him his life. It was horrible to think of a service being held in praise of the heroes of Bolshevism. Why, all the devils in Hell would triumph and rejoice at such a thing. My feelings were very bitter as I pondered on this matter. And I could not help remembering the fight I had fought against Nazism, the battle I had waged against the Gestapo for the rights of God and the Church, and the many occasions on which I had risked not only my own life but also the lives of my relatives for this cause. And now a service was to be held in praise of the deadly enemy of all mankind and of all religious faiths!

It can at least be said to the credit of the Polish priest that whatever he was forced to do, he did with the utmost reluctance. Some time later he said in an almost prophetic manner, "I very much fear that Poland will suffer some dreadful experience." And he foresaw rightly. Catholic Poland will be sorely tried, and it is questionable whether it will stand firm in this trial.

Those who sell their soul to the devil must expect him to come and claim it some day. Bolshevism is the servant of Hell, and its works are robbery, murder, and devastation, prompted by a spirit of cruelty such as the world has never before experienced in the course of its entire history. Only those who themselves have suffered under the terrorism of Bolshevism know this to be so. For this reason it is all the more tragic that other nations whose motto is freedom should actually condone and aid such atrocities, either by keeping silent or by giving their support in some form or other to Bolshevism. Their efforts will be poorly repaid, for mankind, in its blindness, by resorting to such methods, has built its house on sand. And the longer these conditions persist, the greater will be the ultimate catastrophe. Mankind and the world will only achieve a lasting peace if it adopts the spirit of true Christianity and humanity. God will undoubtedly show His Mercy to the world if mankind once more returns to the true Christian faith and keeps His Commandments.

Report No. 83

The Parish of Neumittelwalde, near Gross-Wartenberg¹¹⁸

The parish of Neumittelwalde included 800 Catholics (1942) and 3,425 persons of other denominations (1929). A church (St Joseph's) is mentioned in historical records in 1376. From the middle of the sixteenth century onwards this church was Protestant, the Catholics using the church at Rudelsdorf. In 1857 Neumittelwalde became a curacy and on August 18, 1891, a parish. The present church was built during the years 1893 to 1894.

The pretty little town was a heap of ruins. Eighty per cent of the buildings were destroyed by fire on January 23rd and 24th, 1945, when the Russians invaded Neumittelwalde. On the market square there were only four houses which had not been damaged. The Catholic parish-church was not destroyed by fire, but the steeple was hit and damaged by a shell. The vicarage and the school were not damaged. To judge from the traces left, a fire must have broken out in the cellar at the vicarage. It was probably caused by carelessness on the part of marauders. Polish soldiers and girls had taken up their quarters at the vicarage, and had apparently made themselves at home in the bathroom, after previously dragging out the bath. — St. Joseph's Convent was not damaged, and the Mother Superior and Sister B. were still alive. Practically all the Germans who had remained behind in Neumittelwalde sought refuge at the convent. For three months the nuns could hear the Russians shelling Breslau. The Mother Superior was raped in the wash-house by a Russian. The Russian tried to throw her over some banisters, and in the course of her struggle with him she sustained serious internal injuries. One of the Russian soldiers wanted Sister B. to give him a watch, and on the pretext of going to look for one she fled to the Granowe estate, and

¹¹⁸ s. *Beitraege*, Vol II, p. 849 ff

there sought shelter with some Poles. After all this had happened the nuns for a time laid aside their robes and wore ordinary clothes. Finally, however, after appealing to the Russian commanding officer for protection they donned their robes once more. The Mother Superior managed to save a few of the things at the vicarage and took them along to the convent... Thanks to her, the vestry was not ransacked. The Russians made her stand against the wall in the church on three occasions and threatened to shoot her, but she still refused to unlock the vestry-door...

... Six days after my return to Neumittelwalde some Polish soldiers arrived in the town. They went to the mayor, spread out a map in front of him with the new Polish frontiers marked on it, and informed him that all the Germans were going to be expelled. Thereupon they raided all the houses belonging to Germans and ordered the occupants to pack up their belongings at once. As I was unwilling to comply with this request, one of the Polish soldiers promptly levelled his rifle at me. Then he robbed me of my gold watch, which was a family relic that I had greatly cherished. All the Germans without exception were taken along to the market square, where they were then told to hand over all the money and valuables in their possession to the Poles, otherwise they would be shot at the frontier. But most of them no longer possessed any valuables. The Poles now made all the Germans, including the aged, get in line, and, accompanied by armed guards, we set out from the town on foot, without even having been allowed to take a little food with us. We had proceeded for about three miles and had just reached Schoen-Steine when a soldier on a motor-cycle caught up with us and informed the Polish guards that the Russian commanding officer of the district had issued orders that all the "doroboty" were to go back to the town immediately. Needless to say, Polish civilians had in the meantime ransacked and looted all the German houses in the town and stolen whatever they could find...

The Germans in Neumittelwalde were finally expelled on October 22nd, 1946. They are now scattered throughout the Russian, British, and American Occupied Zones of Germany.

Report No. 84

The Parish of Militsch ¹¹⁹

The parish of Militsch included 1,250 Catholics (1942) and 13,743 persons of other denominations (1929). A parish-church (St Michael's) is mentioned in historical records in 1223. From 1555 until 1654 this church was Protestant. The present church was built during the years 1818 to 1821.

... On Friday evening, January 19th, 1945, orders were issued that Militsch was to be evacuated. Old persons, women and children were to leave the town and proceed to Liegnitz. Next day most of the inhabi-

tants, including a number of men, left the town and the neighbouring villages, thirty-six of which belonged to the parish of Militsch. It was a deeply touching sight to see them all leaving their homes and their native town where they had worked and been happy.

At half-past seven on Monday morning I heard eight shells explode one after the other and I assumed that German troops were blowing up the railway-bridges. Then suddenly I heard another shell explode as it hit the roof the house. The chimney collapsed and I rushed downstairs to the front door. Russian soldiers were running down the street, firing shots at the windows of the houses. Russian armoured cars and infantry followed in their wake. Those of us who had remained behind in the town hid. Some hours later I returned home and discovered that the shop-doors had all been smashed and the shop ransacked and looted. Very soon there was not a single room anywhere in Militsch which had not been looted by the Russians. The right side-door of the portal of the church had been forced open, but, as far as I could see, the interior of the church had not been damaged. The door of the vicarage was open... the whole place had been searched and was in a state of disorder. Next time I entered the church the interior was still undisturbed, and no attempt had been made to break into the vestry... the vicarage, however, must have been raided again in the meantime, for the picture of the Pope, which had previously been hanging on a wall in the middle room, was now lying on the floor and there were holes in it, and the safe was lying in the yard and, as far as I can remember, the back of it had been forced open. We had to report for work every day, even on Sundays. Later on, some of us, including myself, had to collect all the wireless sets from the German inhabitants and take them along to the headquarters of the commanding officer, and after that all the telephones, accumulators, sewing-machines, and clocks. All the best furniture which had been taken from the Germans was used to furnish the rooms at the headquarters of the commanding officer, and the Poles, who had taken over the administration of the town, also requisitioned the best furniture, beds, and carpets, etc. — The sound of shooting could be heard all day, and especially at night. Whenever the Russians entered a room and caught sight of a woman whom they wanted to rape, they would fire a few shots at the wall in order to assert their authority and frighten the occupants of the house. I myself saw women being raped by the Russians, and women used to come and report new cases every day. Many of the women spent the night in the park or elsewhere in order to hide from the Russians...

Mr. Scholz, the plumber, and Mr. Kollewe, the carrier, were both shot a few days after the Russians invaded Militsch...

A great misfortune befell me a week before I was expelled from Militsch (June 20, 1945). At about eleven o'clock one night two Russian officers came to the house and, sticking their heads through a window that was open, demanded quarters for the night. I told them to go along to the headquarters of the commanding officer where they would be

provided with quarters. They walked away, but after a little while they came back again and once more demanded quarters. I again refused to comply with their request, whereupon one of them promptly fired his revolver at me from a distance of about a yard away. One of the bullets lodged in the wall, but the other caught me in the left lung. Blood gushed out of the wounds I had sustained in my chest and my back, and I collapsed...

On August 23rd, 1945, the parish-priest of Militsch arrived back in the town again. As the parish was now for the most part only inhabited by Poles, practically all the Germans having been expelled in June, 1945, the priest took charge of the parish of Tinz near Breslau which was still inhabited by Germans. He remained in Tinz until June 23rd, 1946, when he and the rest of the Germans there were expelled by the Poles. At present most of the members of the Catholic parish of Militsch are living in the Russian Occupied Zone of Germany, namely in Saxony...

The churches in Militsch were not damaged. The parish-church was neither damaged nor looted. St. Anne's Chapel, which in the summer of 1944 had been placed at the disposal of the Polish workers, deported from Warsaw for the so-called "Barthold Project", had still not been made available for divine service by August, 1945, but it was said to be undamaged. The vicarage and the school adjoining the verger's house were raided and looted on several occasions. The office at the vicarage was wilfully ransacked and looted. Both the safes were forced open, and numerous objects were stolen, including one ostensory, one ciborium, one small chalice, and one small case containing a small gold chalice and paten. The rest of the sacred vessels, including a monstrance, a large ciborium, and two chalices, were rescued and are now in use again, as the priest buried them in a hiding-place on January 20th.

Report No. 85

The Parish of Radungen, near Militsch¹²⁰

The parish of Radungen included 1,000 Catholics (1942) and 924 persons of other denominations (1929). Radungen was formerly part of the parish of Trachenberg. The present church was built in 1735 by Count Franz von Hatzfeld and Gleichen. Radungen was a parish from 1735 onwards.

On Wednesday, January 24th, 1945, the Russians invaded Radungen. When the priest returned home after visiting someone in the next village, Radungen was already swarming with Russians. They occupied the vicarage and the convent, and refused to allow the priest and the nuns to enter. The only possessions the priest and the nuns managed to rescue were the clothes they were wearing. The door of the church was open and anyone who wished could enter. But the interior was a dreadful sight! The outer doors of the tabernacle had been forced open, but the Russians

¹²⁰ s. *Beitraege*, Vol. III, p. 709 ff.

had been unable to force open the steel tabernacle. The priest managed to conceal a number of the holy wafers in a paten which he carried hidden under his robes. During the dreadful weeks and months which followed they afforded him and his faithful little flock great consolation. All the cupboards and drawers in the vestry had been forced open, all the sacred linen had been removed, and the vestments torn and cut to shreds. The new, black pall was later found in the cellar at the inn, torn to bits, and the sanctus bell was found in a garden some distance away from the church...

The inhabitants of the village were subjected to the most dreadful and bestial treatment. Women and girls were abducted and raped. Sixteen persons who lived in Radungen and the neighbouring hamlets were shot, stabbed, or beaten to death. They included the following:

- 1) Mr. Strauch, the baker,
- 2) Mr. Schanz, retired overseer,
- 3) Mrs. Anna Reichel,
- 4) Mrs. Kaschel,
- 5) the manager of a dairy, who was staying with Mr. Schanz,
- 6) Miss Ida Troche, who like Mrs. Reichel and Mrs. Kaschel came from Charlottenburg,
- 7) Mr. Schroeter, the miller,
- 8) Mrs. Schroeter, wife of the above,
- 9) Mrs. Walochny,
- 10) Mrs. Gotter,
- 11) Mrs. Maria Marschallek, married daughter of the above,
- 12) Mr. Hermann Gotter, single,
(the last six persons mentioned above lived in Goitke)
- 13) Mr. Gruhl, former innkeeper, of Radungen,
- 14) Mr. Botany, a Czech, who was employed by Mr. Goliasch, the forest-ranger, as his assistant,
- 15) an unknown woman who had sought shelter at the convent,
- 16) Mr. Alois Tschuschke, single, son of Farmer Tschuschke.
He was buried next to his father, who had died a short time previously.

Mr. Paul Zimmer, who was eighty and a retired farmer living in Goitke, went out of his mind after witnessing the atrocities perpetrated by the Russians and committed suicide by hanging himself. During the late afternoon of the dreadful day on which the enemy invaded Radungen, all the inhabitants who were wandering about the village in their distress were rounded up by the Russians and locked up in an empty room... At short intervals during the night Russian officers entered the room, fired shots at the ceiling and the walls, and, levelling their revolvers at those present in the room, searched them again and again. One of the Russians dragged the Mother Superior and one of her servants out of the room with the intention of raping them, but they fortunately managed to

escape in the dark and returned to the room some time later, still trembling with fear.

After they had all said a prayer together, the people in the room were just about to lie down on the floor, in order to snatch a little sleep, when they suddenly heard a great commotion outside the house. A fresh lot of Russians swarmed into the room, but fortunately they went out again almost immediately and took up their quarters in the barn, without molesting anyone in the room. Next day, however, things were worse than ever. Hordes of Russians came into the room, most of them drunk, and shouted and fired shots at the occupants. They seized hold of the women and girls, dragged them into the village, raped them, and then let them go again. This went on for three weeks. Then things began to quieten down a little as most of the Russians had apparently left Radungen. One or two persons ventured out into the village and returned with the news that there were only a few Russians left. Thereupon the villagers went back to their homes again, only to find that the Russians had wrought havoc there.

At the vicarage there were piles of torn and dirty files and records, books, smashed furniture, and broken crockery strewn about the rooms. Feather-beds had been slit open, and the feathers had been scattered all over the place and covered with syrup and preserves. The wash-basins in every room and also the bath had been used as closets. The old and valuable parochial records of the past two hundred years and most of the parochial registers were missing and so, too, were most of the clothes and linen. The crucifixes and the pictures of saints, however, had not been touched. Everybody now set to work to clean up and tidy the rooms. The villagers tried to make their homes habitable again as best as they could, by removing things that could still be used from houses that were untenanted. They were constantly molested by Russian marauders who passed through the village at all hours of the day and night, and were completely at the mercy of these bandits...

Report No. 86

The Parish of Trachenberg, near Militsch ¹²¹

The parish of Trachenberg included 2,462 Catholics (1942) and 4,024 persons of other denominations (1929). The church (Holy Trinity) is mentioned in historical records in 1253. The present church was completed in 1599. Trachenberg became a curacy on August 6, 1697.

... Advancing from the north and east, Russian tanks entered the town, which put up no resistance, on January 23rd, 1945. The blackened chimneys of the ducal fiscal buildings which had been destroyed by fire seemed like a silent accusation as they stood out against the grey wintry sky. It was as if they wanted to remind all those who hurried past of the words of the psalmist in ancient times, "except the Lord keeps the city, the watchman waketh but in vain".

¹²¹ s. *Beitraege*, Vol I, p. 455 ff., and Vol II, p. 857 ff.

With sorrow in my heart I thought of how the German nation had tried the patience of the Lord and of how often God in His Mercy had exhorted the people through his mandatories to return to His Fold. But His warnings had remained unheeded, and the German nation had refused to admit that God is just. When His mercy and patience fail to stir His people He needs must punish them in justice...

We were deeply grieved to discover that the ducal castle, which had come to be the ancient symbol of the town, had been destroyed by fire and was now a heap of ruins. The houses belonging to Sch., O., and P. had also been destroyed by fire. When we reached Riemer Square we found that the newly-built house belonging to Mr. K., the carpenter, was also on fire, and Mr. R.'s granary, which had been stored full of sacks of grain, was still smouldering...

In the vicarage-yard there was a huge pile of records, files, card-index drawers, mass-texts, hymn-books, and prayer-books, etc. I managed to retrieve some of the church-records out of this pile, but the remainder had simply vanished.

The vicarage was used as headquarters by a Russian unit, which was responsible for interning German men throughout the whole province of Lower Silesia. About ten to twelve thousand unfortunate victims are said to have been arrested in our town alone, every day. They were interned in the Catholic school, in the wooden sheds in the school-playground, in the flax-mill, and in a building on School Street...

The parish-church and the chapel of ease at Beichau and the chapel at Bornfelde were broken into soon after the Russians occupied Trachenberg. Apparently the only thing the Russians had been searching for when they broke into the parish-church had been candles. For this reason they had pulled down the chandelier, which hung above the high altar, and had also forced open the heavy oak door leading to the room where the vestments were kept. As far as I could ascertain, however, nothing else had been stolen, in fact, not even the gold chalice, which was the only chalice we had not removed previously but had left in the vestry. After finding that the church had been broken into, the priest affixed a notice in German and Russian, and signed by the Russian commanding officer, on the portal, to the effect that no one was allowed to open the door by force. No attempts were made to break into the church again after that. — The interior of the chapel of ease at Beichau had been badly damaged, and in particular the altar, the organ, and the vestry. — The chapel at Bornfelde had also been raided and looted. The carpet on the altar-steps had been stolen, but thanks to the help of the Russian commanding officer the priest later got it back again.

By April, 1945, the Russians had finished interning all the German men in Trachenberg. The vicarage was evacuated by the Russian soldiers who had taken up their quarters there, but, contrary to the assurance given us by the Russian colonel, they removed all the furniture, including the furniture which had been stored there by the priest's relatives. The only

pieces of furniture which remained in the house were the bookcases, including some of the books but not all, and the kitchen-dressers which had been stored elsewhere. It took months to make the vicarage habitable again...

At the end of June, 1945, there came a bolt from the blue — the expulsion of the Germans by the Poles...

On February 6th, 1945, all men up to the age of seventy who were not bedridden were arrested by the Russians and were locked up in Ross-deutscher's ice-house in Trachenberg. From there they then made us proceed on foot via Trebnitz, Oels, Namslau, and Kreuzburg, to Tschenschau. This exertion proved too much for many of the men, and a large number of them died or were taken ill. From the transit-camp at Tschenschau we were taken on the next stage of our journey as Russian prisoners-of-war. Farmer Josef G. of Trachenberg was also in the group of men that I was with. We eventually reached Peiskretscham in Upper Silesia where, on Palm Sunday, they thrust us into cattle-trucks (one hundred men in each truck) and took us eastwards. After a dreadful journey lasting eight days and eight nights, we finally arrived in Stanislaw on the Dniester on Easter Sunday, April 1st, 1945. The Russians jeered at us, stoned us, beat us, and robbed us of our clothes. I was taken ill with erysipelas and atrophy, and as I was no longer able to work I was sent to Frankfort on the Oder, where I was then discharged on November 9th. Hundreds of fellow-sufferers died on the journey, and to this day their families do not know what has become of them. Those of us who survived were glad to be back in Germany, but we were greatly saddened by the news that we could not return to our beloved Silesia again. I proceeded to Magdeburg, and some weeks later I was reunited with my wife, who in the meantime had been expelled from Silesia, and was now living in Leipzig...

One woman who was expelled from Trachenberg gave the following account: "When we were expelled from Trachenberg in June, 1945, the Poles arrested about twenty of the men, including my husband, and took them to a camp. In September my husband was released after the Poles had practically beaten him to death and made him starve. His arms and legs were covered with open wounds, as a result of the beatings he had been given with butt-ends of rifles and rubber cudgels. He managed to drag himself as far as Ober-Rosbach, near Friedberg in Hesse, where my married son, Heinz, lives. My husband looked so ill and completely neglected that my son did not at first recognize him. My husband said to him, "Heinz, don't you recognize me?" and it was not until he said, "I'm your father," that my son actually recognized him. The people who were present were moved to tears. My son immediately sent for a doctor, who took my husband to the hospital at Friedberg. A fortnight later he died there and was buried in Ober-Rosbach.

The Poles stole all his belongings — his clothes, his braces, shoes, and spectacles. Had my husband tried to reach us after the Poles released him, it would not have been so far a journey, for I had gone to Peterwitz,

near Frankenstein, with my daughter, my daughter-in-law, and Manfred. But I suppose one cannot alter one's fate. And my husband wanted to get away from the Poles at all costs. It was not until we were expelled from Silesia in April, 1946, that I learnt that my husband was dead. I have only heard news of two of the other men who were arrested with him, — Mr. S., the teacher, and Mr. Sch., the watchmaker, from whom I heard a short time ago. Nothing is known of the fate of the others. I have often asked myself why it was that my husband, who had committed no crime, was made to suffer so much, whilst others, who have so many crimes on their conscience, are still alive!"

Report No. 87

The Parish of Seitsch, near Guhrau¹²²

The parish of Seitsch included 2,500 Catholics (1942) and 2,062 persons of other denominations (1929). The church (St Martin's) is mentioned in historical records in 1289. Until 1810 Seitsch was under the provostship of the Cistercian Abbey at Leubus. The present church was built in a lavish baroque style by Martin Franz during the years 1736 to 1740. The interior decorations are by Mangold, Felder, and van Bentun. — Seitsch is one of the oldest and most famous towns of Silesia. It is mentioned in the oldest charter pertaining to Silesia, namely the Papal Charter granted to the diocese of Breslau in 1155, as one of the ducal castle domains. As such, Seitsch no doubt possessed a castle-chapel and a parish-priest even in those early days. The first priest of Seitsch is mentioned in a charter of the year 1286. In the years 1300 and 1308 Duke Heinrich III of Glogau presented the estate, the church, and the parish of Seitsch to the monastery at Leubus. This monastery encouraged and furthered settlement by Germans.

... Next day we passed through Nahrten and Langen on our way back to Seitsch. The town was sadly changed since we had last seen it in January, 1945. Many of the houses had been destroyed by fire, others were no longer inhabited, and there was not a soul in the streets. All the doors of the vicarage were wide open, and the interior was in an indescribable state. There were piles of filth and rubbish in all the rooms. There was straw lying all over the place, and the house had apparently served as lodgings for troops, who had been passing through the town, and for soldiers, who had had to round up all the cattle in the neighbouring villages. Feather-beds had been slit open and the feathers strewn all over the floor. Pieces of broken crockery and glass, pages torn out of books, and parts of furniture lay scattered here and there. In two of the rooms there were traces of a fire and the wallpaper was all burnt. All the cupboards had been forced open. The pantry and the cellar had, of course, been stripped bare. But it was no good lamenting — we had returned and intended to remain! We managed to clean the kitchen and one of the smaller rooms and make them fairly habitable. Very soon,

¹²² *s. Beitrage*, Vol. II, p. 338.

Family Vogt, who had remained in Seitsch, came to our aid and brought us some food. During the next few days several more inhabitants returned to Seitsch. As most of them found their houses in an even worse state than ours or else destroyed by fire, as for instance Mr. Laube's house, they took up their quarters with us, and slept on straw on the floor in the big front room at night.

The church was in such a dreadful condition that it was impossible to hold divine service there on the first Sunday after our return to Seitsch. The altar-cloths had been stolen, the vestry had been ransacked and looted, and so, too, had the cupboard at the vicarage which contained the vestments. Part of a white chasuble, a chalice, and a missal had been rescued by Family V. and hidden for safety. We had brought back a small bottle of sacramental wine with us which had been given us in Polkwitz. Miss R. now set to and baked some wafers with the aid of two small plates which she heated. We cleaned the church, tidied up the vestry, and decorated the high altar, and on the second and third Sunday after our return to Seitsch we were able to hold a service...

On the second Sunday there were a lot of Poles, who had settled in Seitsch, in church. The service was held in German, and the German congregation sang the hymn, "We bow to Thee, O Lord!" On the third Sunday there were not so many Poles present. During the service the steward of the estate which had been taken over by the Russians entered the church several times and fetched the Germans away to work, even those who were just about to take Holy Communion. It was our last service. We had expected the rest of the parishioners to return to Seitsch, but we waited in vain. Only a few of them came back. In the meantime a Polish militia unit had arrived in Seitsch. About noon, on the Monday after we had held our last service in church, someone hastily rang the door-bell at the vicarage. When I opened the door there was a woman from Weschkau standing outside. The tears were streaming down her face, as she sobbed out, "Look, they're driving us out!" A sad procession was just in the act of passing down the street. The inhabitants of Weschkau and Braunau, who had either remained there or had returned, were being driven out by the Poles. Pushing handcarts and clutching bundles containing their sole possessions, they were setting out for an unknown destination. There was nothing I could do to help them. All I knew was that the same fate would no doubt befall us here in Seitsch, either today or tomorrow. And my surmisal proved correct, for next day, after a few Russians had raided the house in the morning and robbed us of the last of the clothes and linen we possessed, some Polish militiamen appeared and informed us that we must be ready to leave the house and the town within half an hour's time. It did not take us long to pack our belongings, for all we possessed were the clothes we were wearing and some bedding. The handcart which we had had on our return to Seitsch had been taken from us a few days previously by a Pole, but he had left us a heavy wheelbarrow in its stead. We piled up our bedding on it, and proceeded to the collecting-point...

*Report No. 88***The Parish of Trebnitz**¹²³

The parish of Trebnitz included 3,600 Catholics (1942) and 7,678 persons of other denominations (1929). A parish-church (St Peter's) probably existed as early as 1155; it was Protestant from 1530 onwards and then Catholic again from 1671 to 1708. — The church dedicated to St. Bartholomew was built in the late Romanesque style during the years 1203 to 1219 as the collegiate church of the Cistercian Convent, which was founded in 1202. It possessed a consecrated crypt. St Hedwig, Duchess of Silesia, died in Trebnitz on October 15, 1243, and her coffin was later placed in St Hedwig's Chapel which was built in 1268. The tomb dates from the year 1680. In front of the high altar is the tomb of her husband, Duke Heinrich I (died 1238). After 1700 certain alterations in the baroque style were made in the interior of the church, and in 1789 the west tower was added. The Convent was rebuilt during the years 1697 to 1724, and was secularized in 1810. Since then the convent-church has been used as the Catholic parish-church. The convent was at first used as a cloth-factory. Since 1889, however, it has been inhabited by the Sisters of Mercy of St Charles Borromeo and has been the head convent of their order in Silesia.

On January 25th, 1945, at one-forty p.m., the Russians entered Trebnitz. As they approached the convent the Mother Superior, Mother Celsa, went out to the gate to meet them and in this way she managed to prevent them from looting and setting fire to the convent. In the course of the afternoon the Russians set fire to various buildings in Zirkwitz Street, and also to the law-courts, the district bank, and Tatschke's. For ten days, and especially at night, fires broke out again and again, and it almost seemed as if the Russians systematically set fire to buildings in order to light up their way as they passed through the town. About eighty per cent of the buildings in the town were destroyed in this manner at the beginning of the invasion. The vicarage was also destroyed by fire. The basilika and the convent were not damaged. About eight hundred persons sought refuge at the convent. Mrs. and Miss Kleinert, who had remained in their apartment in Richthofen Street, were raped and murdered by Russian soldiers who were drunk. Various persons at the convent were also molested, but conditions improved somewhat after the first ten days, as the Russian commanding officer of the town enforced strict measures.

... On February 5th, 1945, all men between the ages of sixteen and sixty who were staying at the convent were taken to the wooden shed in the convent-garden by the Russian police and detained there. They were then interrogated and most of them assigned to clearing-up jobs.

At six o'clock in the morning, on February 18th, double bread-rations were suddenly doled out, and at seven o'clock about 150 men, who had been rounded up in various cellars, were marched off to Oels as prisoners.

¹²³ s. *Beitraege*, Vol III, p. 716 ff.

With hardly a pause we proceeded on foot to Oels, via Bingerau, a distance of twenty-two miles. Despite the fact that I had an artificial leg, I was also forced to make this journey on foot. The same evening they put us on a train and three days later we arrived in Cracow. We received practically no food whatsoever throughout the entire journey. Upon our arrival in Cracow they took us to the Monte Lupa prison, where they detained us for about twelve days. The food-rations we received whilst there were extremely meagre. Most of us, incidentally, were covered with lice. After they had deloused us and shaved off our hair (delousing proved futile) they put us on a train, and the next stage of our journey to Central Russia, a distance of about 1,250 miles, began.

The journey was a nightmare. There were more than forty of us in one truck. About eighteen of the men were Germans, whilst the rest were men who had been members of the Wlassow Army, namely Turkomans, Tartars, Caucasians, and Russians. The food we were given during the journey was very poor, and we Germans were treated worse than the rest. We were not even given a drink of water most of the time, and were obliged to eat snow in order to quench our thirst. As a result most of us began to suffer from gastritis and dysentery, and several of the men were so seriously ill (a farmer who hailed from Paulskirch, and Mr. Mueller of Raschen) that they were hardly able to walk by the time we reached our destination a fortnight later. Mr. Fi. and Mr. U. were both of them very ill. Eventually we reached Alschevsk near Voroschilovgrad on the Don, where we were immediately taken to a camp. We remained there until September 18th, 1945. The death-rate was very high, particularly to begin with. By September, 1,100 of the 1,600 camp-inmates had died.

On September 18th, Camp 1236 in Alschevsk was suddenly disbanded, and 150 of the internees, including the four survivors from Trebnitz, were taken to a camp near Nakievka, about 125 miles further west in the Donets Valley. Here conditions were the same as in most of the other camps. Corruption and bribery were the order of the day. Living conditions were even worse than they had been at the camp in Alschevsk. I became weaker and weaker and lost weight at an alarming rate. As a result, my artificial leg no longer fitted properly, and the rest of my leg was so sore that by November I could hardly walk at all. On November 20th, I was sent to hospital. May had been sent to hospital previously and from there had then been transferred to a sanatorium. On December 11th, seventy-three men, all of them no longer able to work, including Sitte and myself, were unexpectedly released and sent back to Germany. It was December 31st, by the time we eventually arrived at our destination, Frankfort on the Oder. I travelled in the ambulance section of the train. During our two weeks' journey fifty-three of the men with me died and their bodies were thrown out of the train.

*Report No. 89***The Parish of Obernigk, near Trebnitz ¹²⁴**

The parish of Obernigk included 1,200 Catholics (1942) and 4,424 persons of other denominations (1929). The church (St Hedwig's) was built in 1901 as a chapel of ease of the church at Prausnitz. From June 1, 1904, onwards Obernigk was a curacy, and became a parish on October 1, 1920.

... On Thursday, January 25th, 1945, at three o'clock in the afternoon, Russian troops invaded Obernigk. Most of the houses on Hitler Street, through which the Russians passed, were destroyed by fire. The priest had just been to St. Hedwig's Convent to confess the nuns and was on his way back to the vicarage when the bombs and shells exploded. We spent the night at the vicarage in fear and trembling as the fires, which had broken out, were rapidly spreading, and we fully expected to die. On Friday morning things were a little quieter, but at noon Russian soldiers started raiding the houses. They ransacked and looted, wrought havoc, and committed all kinds of atrocities, and people could be heard screaming for help all day long. About a hundred persons were shot, and about a hundred persons committed suicide in fear and despair. The Russians set fire to more than three hundred villas, and what had once been a pretty little town was now a heap of ruins and filth...

Twenty soldiers had taken up their quarters at the Catholic vicarage. After they departed we were horrified to see the havoc they had wrought. Most of the furniture had been stolen and the piano had been smashed to bits with an axe. Practically everything else that had been left had been damaged and smashed. There was a huge heap of rubbish and filth in each of the rooms. It took four weeks to remove all the things that had been smashed — more than forty handcarts full — and to clean the rooms. Other houses were in a similar condition, but most havoc had been wrought at the vicarage. The interior of the church was just as bad. The beautiful manger, which had been left standing in the church after Epiphany, and all the statuettes had been smashed, and many valuables, as for instance several large hand-embroidered carpets, gold vessels, etc. had been stolen. It took the women of the parish a week to clean and tidy up the church and make it fit for use. The land surrounding the church had been used as a pasture, and the doors of the church had been left open, with the result that cows had been able to enter, and there were heaps of cow-dung all over the coco-nut matting...

The town was sadly ravaged by fire. Hitler Street and Riemberger Street suffered the most damage, practically all the houses in these two streets being destroyed by fire. The big Protestant school also burnt down. The Russians also set fire to the new Catholic school, but thanks to the fact that the ceilings were made of concrete the flames did not spread,

¹²⁴ s. *Beitraege*, Vol. III, p. 702 ff.

and the only part of the building which was destroyed was the apartment belonging to the school-caretaker. The Russians later set up a hospital in the school-buildings.

After Breslau and Berlin had capitulated and the Russians had celebrated their victory they left Obernigk, and only a small unit remained behind as part of the army of occupation. By the end of May, 1945, things were fairly quiet again, and many of the inhabitants who had fled from the town in January now returned. We were instructed to till the land and sow potatoes and vegetables, and we were just beginning to settle down in our homes again and hoping to be allowed to live in peace when the news reached us, like a bolt from the blue, that the Polish militia was going to turn us out. It was seven o'clock in the morning, on Thursday, June 28th, 1945, when we heard the news, and by nine o'clock the Polish hordes had arrived. They shouted at us and told us to clear out immediately, otherwise they would shoot us. They drove us out of the house, threatening us with their revolvers and flogging us with their whips. By noon all the inhabitants of Obernigk were lined up in the streets, with the few possessions they had been allowed to collect loaded on small handcarts, and ready to trek forth into the unknown. The worst thing that happened to us in all our sufferings during the past months was that we were now forced to leave our native country. For days on end we trekked along wearily and passed through Riemberg, Wohlau, Lueben, and Sprottau. We were completely exhausted. Finally, we split up into small groups, and after tramping the roads for eight weeks, thirteen of us eventually arrived in Forst in Lusatia. The only food we lived on during the whole of the journey was mushrooms, berries, and bran. At night we slept in barns and pigsties.

Report No. 90

The Parish of Wohlau¹²⁵

The parish of Wohlau included 2,350 Catholics (1942) and 6,502 persons of other denominations (1929). A church (St Laurence's) is mentioned in historical records in 1288. It was rebuilt in the fourteenth century, and has been Protestant since about 1530 — In the year 1708 a so-called St Joseph's curacy was established with a chapel in the castle — In 1712 a Carmelite Convent was founded, which, together with the church, was completed by 1724. The convent was secularized in 1810. From 1811 onwards Wohlau was a curacy, but became a parish on January 5, 1857.

... The nearer we got to the town, on our return on June 8th, 1945, the more ruins we saw. We passed the station which had been destroyed by fire, and the post-office and the Protestant school which had likewise been demolished. The market square had been very badly damaged, and

¹²⁵ s. *Beitraege*, Vol I, p. 466 ff.

the townhall had been gutted by fire. About half of the buildings in Wohlau had been destroyed.

The church and the vicarage had not suffered any external damage, but they were a dreadful sight inside and had been ransacked and looted. Shots had been fired at the statue of the Saviour on the Cross in front of the church and the mouth had been damaged very badly. Inside the church, the organ had been smashed and the organ-pipes had been thrown down into the nave and lay scattered about on the floor. Seven large pews were missing — they had apparently been used as firewood. There was a huge tear in the large painting representing the Visitation of Our Lady (Willmann school), and most of the statuettes on the nine altars and in the Christmas manger had been smashed (someone had stuck a cigarette in the mouth of one of the statues). The tabernacle and the shrine on the high altar had been forced open and thrown on the floor. The Agnus Dei with its sparkling crown, which had adorned the tabernacle, was also lying on the ground, damaged and soiled. The large picture over the high altar had been damaged by a number of bullets. The four beautiful carpets on the altar-steps (they had been partly woven by hand by some of the women of the parish) and the broad strips of carpeting in the aisles had been stolen. The silver Sanctuary Lamp had been torn down, some of the beautiful gilt carving on the high altar and the pulpit had been hewn off, and all the candelabra had either been taken to pieces or bent. The safe in the vestry had been opened by an expert (the oxygen cylinder used for this purpose had been left lying on the floor). All the cupboards in the vestry had been emptied, and all the beautiful old robes (about fifty), some of them several hundred years old, the altar-cloths, and the verger's and servers' surplices and robes had been stolen. All the sacred vessels were missing, with the exception of the monstrance and a chalice which were found beneath the debris of the organ. Strange to say, none of the missals had been stolen. Someone had, however, written the words, "There is no God", in Russian in one of the missals... I later found two scraps of the beautiful old vestments, used on Corpus Christi Day, in the toilet at the vicarage, — sufficient proof of the fact that the disgraceful atrocities committed in the church were the work of Russian atheism.

The above account will serve to show the brutal and barbarous manner in which the Russians behaved. Advancing from Steinau, they had captured Wohlau on January 25th. And, unfortunately, the German security units had omitted to destroy the 2,250 gallons of petrol stored at the "Haelterhof" before the arrival of the Russians!

A dreadful period of suffering now began for those of the inhabitants who had chosen to remain behind in Wohlau despite the evacuation measures enforced. There were about one hundred and forty of them altogether and most of them were old and sick. The majority of them sought refuge at St. Joseph's Convent. Who would ever have thought that the tiny convent would one day become the last refuge of the town of Wohlau! For several months the Mother Superior, Mother Martina, and

the nuns, with unforgettable self-sacrifice, sheltered and fed more than a hundred persons, Catholics and Protestants alike. And, as if by a miracle of God, the convent was spared. The rest of the inhabitants who had remained behind in Wohlau and were found in their homes by Russian marauders shortly after the invasion were either shot on the spot (it has been ascertained so far that twenty persons were shot, including Dr. Muschalek, an official at the county court), or turned out. Practically all the women and girls were raped. Russian soldiers on one occasion actually raped a woman of seventy who was already dead. Many of the inhabitants were so utterly reduced to despair that they committed suicide. Many of them perished in the flames when their houses were destroyed by fire (including Mr. and Mrs. Dierschke, an old married couple), and a number of them died as a result of the suffering and hardship they endured. It will probably never be possible to ascertain exactly how many people died in Wohlau. Most of them were buried in gardens or out in the fields, without coffins.

Unfortunately, the Russians decided to set up a transit-camp in Wohlau, where Russian military and civilian insurgents and deserters and also German soldiers who had belonged to the S.S. were sentenced. Some of them were shot on the spot. On one occasion 103 persons were executed during the night at the back of the vicarage. The rest were taken to Siberia. Some of them managed to escape beforehand, by climbing onto the roof of the vicarage. Sometimes there were as many as 10,000 prisoners in the three concentration camps which had been set up in Wohlau (one of them was at the back of the vicarage, the other was in the prison, and the third was located at the former labour-service camp). Only those who lived in Wohlau at that time will realize what it meant to have thousands of Russians in the town.

It was not safe to be out in the streets. Even in their homes persons were constantly in danger of being robbed, ill-treated, or arrested. Sometimes the houses were raided by Russian soldiers; on other occasions they would be raided by Russian civilians or by OGPU men, of whom there were hundreds in the town. People could be constantly heard shouting for help. Sometimes a Russian sentry would appear in answer to their cries, but, as a rule, he then helped the marauders and not the occupants of the house. Hundreds of lorries drove through the town every day, loaded with German furniture which had been stolen and was being taken to Russia. In like manner huge herds of cattle — horses, cows, and sheep, were driven through the streets and taken to Russia. Both by day and at night the Russians stole everything they set eyes on, including corn, cabbages, turnips, fruit, vegetables, and especially onions, which they ate before they were even ripe.

Despite all this wilful destruction and looting, it must, however, be admitted that many of the Russians were kind (much more so than the Poles) to those in need, and especially to little children, whom they would often lift up and caress. In fact, I was glad to have my little nephew, Dieter, go with me as my "guardian angel" when I visited my parishioners.

But in general it can be said that the average Russian is dangerous. Numerous Germans were arrested by the OGPU men for no reason whatsoever. And this fate befell me, too, on September 10th, 1945. With great cunning the Russians accused me of being a Gestapo spy and of having concealed ammunition in the church, and, with a diabolical expression on their faces, asked me what I intended to do to save myself. I listened to their accusations with the utmost calmness, inspired in me by my implicit faith in God, and after they had interrogated me for six hours they finally released me.

During the six hours that I faced them I learnt more about the mentality of the Russian people than I had ever learnt during all the years that I had read about them in books. The stony expression on their faces, which look as though they could never light up with a smile and resemble the faces of robots rather than human beings, is one of atheism incarnate. And yet, even these "soulless" creatures have a spark of virtue hidden somewhere within them... Alcohol has been the Russian's undoing and has not only reduced him to brutality, laziness, and vice, but has also paved the way for Bolshevism. Without the evil influence of alcohol the Russian people would never have adopted Bolshevism so readily nor retained it so long. Most of the atrocities were committed by the Russians when they were drunk. In the little town of Wohlau there were five distilleries working day and night to keep the Russians supplied with liquor. One of the distilleries used 2,800 cwts. of potatoes (which were fit for human consumption) in 1945 in order to distil liquor for the Russians.

Shortly after the Russian invasion the Poles also arrived in Wohlau. Very soon all the best posts in the town were held by shady characters. In 1945 we had three different starosts (administrative head of the district), each of whom only held this office a short time. The Polish mayor was a teacher by profession and his name was German, namely Eugen Dakert. He was sly and crafty, and, in addition to his office as mayor, he also ran a large farm and carried on a flourishing business in "exchange goods". In the beginning he used to demand a fee of anything up to 2,000 Marks whenever the death of a German inhabitant was registered, and allegedly he used these fees to pay the officials in his employ. After a time, however, the Germans simply stopped registering deaths and buried their dead in secret under cover of darkness, without the mayor's "official" permission!

Wohlau's fate was decided on August 3rd, 1945. By the decisions reached in the Potsdam Agreement East Germany as far as the Oder and the Lusatian Neisse was to be under Polish administration, although the final delimitation of the frontiers was not at that time fixed. Most of the Germans probably did not realize the significance of these decisions at the time. Indeed, many of them were glad that the Catholic Poles were taking over the regime from the godless Russians. But their hopes were soon to be deceived. It very soon became obvious that the Russians had obtained an advantage in the Potsdam "game of chess". The Russians and

the Poles now set about putting this advantage to their own use, — the Russians versus the Poles, and the Poles versus the Germans. In any case, the Russians, contrary to the decisions reached in the Potsdam Agreement, continued to remain with their Polish "friends" in East Germany. And we poor Germans now had two armies of occupation in the country. How we envied our fellow-countrymen in the American and British Occupied Zones of Germany!

The Poles now attempted to assert their authority and influence throughout East Germany. Wohlau was renamed Wolow. And what had formerly been known as Station Street was now dedicated to the saviour of Poland and renamed "Marshal Stalin Avenue". The irony of it all was, however, that, in contrast to all these proud names, the streets were still a mass of ruins and debris. Eventually, the Russian commanding officer of the town issued an order that all the debris was to be removed. The Polish mayor then rounded up Germans, including mothers with small babies, to perform this task which took weeks to complete. Poles ran our farms, that is to say, they only tilled a small area of the land, as they had not been used to more in their own country! Those who were better off either found posts in the various administrative departments or else they started a business of their own.

When we had returned to Wohlau in the spring of 1945 and seen all the damage that had been done, we had consoled ourselves with the thought that we should be able to rebuild Wohlau in five years' time and that the Russians would soon leave. But one disappointment followed another. The Russians remained... and were joined by the Poles. Instead of carrying out our reconstruction plans we were now forced to wear a white band on our sleeve, branding us as German slaves and scapegoats. Any half-grown Polish militiaman (there were now more than a hundred Polish policemen in Wohlau as compared to three policemen when Wohlau was German) had the right to stop the Germans on the street, even when they were going to church, and take them off to work somewhere, or hit them in the face without running the risk of being punished for what he did. Countless German men and women were arrested and taken to the famous OGPU cellar, where they were tortured in a most brutal manner. Many of them were beaten to death and their bodies then thrown onto the dung-heap outside. The cynical remark, "Another one dispatched to eternity", was certainly justified in those days...

It was quite natural that all the Germans should cling to their native country and should want to remain in Wohlau. With the exception of four families who spoke Polish fluently, no one, however, wanted to remain if it meant giving up their German nationality and becoming a Polish subject. Two of the Germans in Wohlau who had previously been Communists were on good terms with the Russians.

On July 6th, 1945, that is to say almost a month before the decisions reached at Potsdam, the Poles expelled the first lot of Germans from Wohlau. Eight hundred of the seven thousand inhabitants of Wohlau had

returned to the town by that time. On August 14th, 1945, the vicar of Wohlau together with three hundred of the inhabitants and fifteen hundred Germans who lived in the district of Wohlau were expelled by the Poles. Prior to leaving they were searched by the Poles and the vicar was deprived of his bedding, an additional suit he had taken with him, an overcoat, and various other possessions. The Reverend Maliske, vicar of Stuben, near Wohlau, who was eighty and an invalid (he died on December 3rd, 1946, in Selm in Westphalia) was actually forced to strip.

The inhabitants of Wohlau are now scattered throughout the various occupied zones of Germany.

Report No. 91

The Parish of Auras, near Wohlau¹²⁶

The parish of Auras included 1,000 Catholics (1942) and 2,732 persons of other denominations (1929). A church (St Michael's) is mentioned in historical records in 1218. The present church was built during the years 1750 to 1789.

... The Russians wrought dreadful havoc in Auras, where they shot all the inhabitants who had remained behind, including the Catholic priest, Father Martin Scholl, the Sisters of Mercy of St. Charles Borromeo, and the Protestant pastor. Both the churches and most of the houses were destroyed by fire. —

Sister Annunziata had tended the sick and the aged in Auras. She had also held the office of sacrist and had looked after the church. The parish-priest of Auras, Father Martin Scholl¹²⁷, had refused to leave his parish when the Russians invaded Silesia as there were still about 150 to 200 parishioners in Auras. On January 25th and 26th, 1945, Holy Mass was celebrated in the church for the last time. On January 27th, the priest removed the tabernacle from the church and took it to the vicarage, as mass was to be celebrated there in future instead of in the church. On January 27th and 28th, the Russians arrived in Auras.

Sister Annunziata was on her way to the church to fetch something or other when she was attacked by a Mongol. What exactly happened has only become known through the accounts given by other persons.

The sister of the priest arrived in Auras in November, 1945, in order to see how her brother was. There were still a few parishioners left in the village, who had managed to survive the Russian invasion as they had hidden in an air-raid shelter. The mother of one of the servers at the church gave the priest's sister the following account: Sister Annunziata was attacked by a Mongol when she reached the square in front of the

¹²⁶ s. *Beitraege*, Vol. III, p. 704

¹²⁷ Cf. *The Martyrdom of Silesian Priests 1945/46*, pp. 76-77.

church. He stabbed her in the stomach with his sabre, then slashed at her, and dismembered her body. All that was found of her afterwards was her rosary, which the priest's sister in 1947 sent to Sister Annunziata's sister, who is also a nun. The rosary had been torn from Sister Annunziata's girdle and there was a piece of her robe still attached to it when it was found.

The Mother Superior, Sister Maxima, of Auras, was strangled by the Russians on the same day. She was found dead at the vicarage. Father Scholl was shot. In addition, about 150 inhabitants of Auras were also shot by the Russians. The priest and the Mother Superior were buried in the yard of the vicarage, near to the manure-heap, in a hole which was about six feet deep. During the winter of 1945 to 1946 their bodies were exhumed and buried in the churchyard. The bodies of the villagers who had been murdered were later found in cellars and air-raid shelters and were buried in mass graves during the winter of 1945 to 1946. A nun helped to bury them.¹²⁸

Report No. 92

The Parish of Kleinkreidel, near Wohlau¹²⁹

The parish of Kleinkreidel included 1,153 Catholics (1942) and 462 persons of other denominations (1929). A church (St Michael's) is mentioned in historical records in 1293. The present church was built during the years 1898 and 1899. Until 1810 Kleinkreidel belonged to the abbey of the Augustinian prebendaries in Breslau.

... It was very quiet in Kleinkreidel on January 24th, 1945, for there were only twenty Germans left in the village. At the convent there were thirty children, thirty old men, four young girls, one novice, and seventeen nuns. All these persons were obliged to remain behind in Kleinkreidel. There was no lorry available in Breslau to come and take the children (of Russian, Polish, and French origin) and old people away...

According to the diary in which I jotted down in brief the events which occurred at that time, the Red Army occupied our village on January 26th, 1945. The Russian troops advanced towards Kleinkreidel from Wohlau and then proceeded to Leubus. After some fierce shelling the Russians crossed the Oder at Leubus on the morning of February 8th. The town of Liegnitz was captured by the enemy, and there were now no obstacles to impede their advance on Breslau and Berlin. For a fortnight after the occupation of the village it was full of Russians. These

¹²⁸ This information has been ascertained from various reports

¹²⁹ s. *Beitraege*, Vol III, p 654 ff.

were the hardest times we ever experienced. Later on when I used to see Russians in Thuringia, I could hardly believe that they can be as cruel as they were in Kleinkreidel. They seem to have a dual personality. In March, 1945, a Russian unit took up its quarters in the village. To judge from the questions they asked, they themselves were very surprised at the thorough manner in which their predecessors had got to work! The following incidents will serve to show what we were forced to endure during the first fortnight that the Russians occupied our village.

There was a Ukrainian girl, called Theissa, employed at the convent who acted as interpreter when the Russians arrived. She told them that the nuns had been very good to her. The Russians had set fire to some of the buildings in the village, and when Theissa saw the flames leaping up she asked one of the Russians why they had set fire to the houses. For the first time I heard the explanation which was generally given for all such things, "to jest woina" (that's war). The evening sky was aglow. Wohlau was on fire. There was a reddish glow above the tree-tops. It must have been caused by the fires at Steinau.

One night the house next-door, in which there were three persons, including an old woman who was crippled with rheumatism, burnt down. The old woman, who was helpless, perished in the flames. Two Russian soldiers prevented us from going into the house in order to try and save her. Looting, burning, and murdering were the order of the day whilst Kleinkreidel was part of the fighting zone. Ten persons were killed in the village and four persons were missing. We endeavoured to find out what had happened to the missing persons as soon as we could, but it was not until 1946 that their bodies were found under a dung-heap. Young Mrs. Schwanke and her two little children had remained at the home of her foster-parents. Whenever Russians came to the house she wrapped herself in blankets and hid in the attic. On one occasion one of the Russians discovered her and shot her. Next morning her old foster-father carried her body to the churchyard. We were all of us moved to tears at the sight. That was on February 5th, 1945, the Feast of St. Agatha. The nuns at the convent looked after Mrs. Schwanke's two little children.

A few days later the Russian commanding officer issued an order that all the villagers who had sought refuge at the convent were to return to the village. Three women and a man moved into the house belonging to Mr. Reichelt, which was situated in the main street of the village. They often used to come across to our house during the day and tell us what had happened. Soldiers would appear at the house and they would then have to work for them. One day, however, the three women and the man failed to put in an appearance. We tried to find out what had happened to them, but our efforts proved futile. After the Russians had left we searched the house, but could find no trace of them. It was not until the late summer of 1945 that their bodies were found under a dung-heap. We buried them together in one coffin. Their names were August Hanschke, Miss Elisabeth Guenther, Mrs. Reichelt of Kleinkreidel, and Mrs. Stuller of Wohlau.

The priests in the neighbouring villages of Losswitz¹³⁰ and Krehlau¹³¹ were shot by the Russians. From January 23th until March 17th, 1945, divine service was held at the convent. From March 18th, onwards services were again held in the parish-church of Kleinkreidel. After the capitulation about eight hundred German Catholics returned to the village. In 1946 the inhabitants of Kleinkreidel were expelled by the Poles in three groups. The parish-priest was forced to leave on December 18th, 1946, together with the last fourteen Germans left in the parish.

Report No. 93

The Parish of Krehlau, near Wohlau¹³²

The parish of Krehlau included 1,110 Catholics (1942) and 2,477 persons of other denominations (1929). A church (St. Martin's) is mentioned in historical records in 1305. The present church was built in 1860. Until 1810 Krehlau belonged to the primates of Breslau.

... There was a feeling of considerable unrest in the village on the evening of December 24th, 1945, but it seemed to pass when divine service began. Meanwhile, however, a terrible tragedy was enacted at the upper end of the village.

Some Polish youths were foolishly playing about with guns — like they do on New Year's Eve — and shooting here and there at random, partly for a joke and partly with criminal intent. They decided to use the little house belonging to Mrs. Wengler, a widow, as a target. The house was occupied by Mrs. Wengler and her thirty-three-year old son, who was by nature peace-loving and somewhat timorous. The Poles smashed the little summer-house in the garden and then proceeded to fire shots at the door of the house. Paul and his mother were afraid lest the Poles would force their way into the house and were standing behind the door. Paul was hit by a bullet which entered his shoulder-blade and lodged in his spine. He collapsed and died instantaneously. — And all this happened whilst the Polish priest was delivering his Christmas sermon, of peace on earth and goodwill towards man, to his fellow-countrymen.

We buried Paul Wengler in the churchyard at Krehlau near to the grave of Father Rudolf Sabisch, the priest who was shot by the Russians. Most of the inhabitants of the village and also a number of Poles attended the funeral. At the burial service we prayed for our enemies and for the murderer who had desecrated Christmas Eve.

¹³⁰ The priest concerned was Father Alois Pohl (born on October 24, 1877, ordained on June 20, 1903, murdered in the spring of 1945. The exact date on which he was murdered could not be ascertained).

¹³¹ Father Rudolf Sabisch (born on September 1, 1909, ordained on April 5, 1936) was shot on January 29, 1945, and died on February 8, 1945. Cf *The Martyrdom of Silesian Priests 1945/46*, p. 75.

¹³² s. *Betraege*, Vol II, p. 24

*Report No. 94***The Monastery of Leubus, near Wohlau** ¹³³

The curacy of Leubus-Klosterplatz and the parish of Leubus-Staedtel together included 3,096 Catholics (1942) and 2,018 persons of other denominations (1929). In 1163 Cistercians took over the monastery which had been founded by Benedictines in 1150. The church (The Assumption of the Virgin Mary) and the monastery were destroyed by the Hussites in 1432. The collegiate church, built in the Gothic style, was completed in 1508. Various additions and alterations in the interior in the baroque style were made during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. During the years 1685 to 1735 the monastery was rebuilt and was secularized in 1810. From 1828 until 1945 the monastery was used as a lunatic asylum. From 1818 onwards the church served as the church of the curacy. — The church (St Valentine's) in Leubus-Staedtel is mentioned in historical records in 1217. The present church was built during the years 1734 to 1745 ¹³⁴.

... It was with considerable dismay that we viewed the sad change which had been wrought in Leubus, when we returned there at the end of May, 1945. More than seventy houses had been razed to the ground. The bridge across the Oder had been blown up by German troops in January. The monastery-church and the Weinberg church had only been damaged slightly as far as the exterior was concerned, but the interior resembled a robbers' den. There was not a single pew left in the monastery church, and most of the twenty-five altars had been damaged. The huge carved figures of the apostles were still standing near the high altar. The rest of the statues and altar-pieces had been carefully removed prior to the invasion of the Russians and taken to the vault for safety. The Russians had meanwhile wrought havoc in the vault. The tombs had all been opened and searched. There was a pile of dirt and rubbish at the entrance to the vault. Some of the statues had been smashed and used as fuel for the sauna-baths which the Russians had set up in the village. One of the young men of my parish who had been employed as a fireman at one of these saunas managed to rescue a beautiful baroque statue of an angel, which had been removed from the royal chapel, and gave it to me on my return to Leubus. The vestry had been literally stripped bare. The huge cupboards in which the vestments had been stored had vanished. About fifty chasubles and copes had been consigned to the rubbish-heap. All we managed to retrieve were soiled fragments. The ancient antiphonals and rituals were all missing. We found the chalices and monstrances, bent and desecrated, under the debris. The first time I walked through the church again after my return I was accompanied by a Russian colonel, who merely commented dryly on seeing the damage, "wojna" (war).

¹³³ s. *Beitraege*, Vol I, p. 435 ff. — See also Christmas Messages, addressed to the members of the parish, Bad Pyrmont.

¹³⁴ Cf. Paul Wels, *Kloster Leubus in Schlesien* Breslau, 1908. — Paul Wels, *Geschichte des Klosters Leubus und seine Bedeutung fuer Schlesien* 2nd. ed., Liegnitz, 1923.

And now a few words as to the fate of the valuable works of art belonging to the monastery — the Willmann paintings, the choir-stalls, the pietà (a present from St. Hedwig), and the rest of the statues. These were removed to the old monastery-church at Liebenthal, near Loewenberg, by the conservator of works of art in Lower Silesia during the spring of 1944. A Berlin armaments factory had moved into the monastery in 1943, thus endangering the church and all its priceless treasures. The last time I was in the vicinity of Loewenberg, after we had fled from Leubus to escape the Russians, I had had a chance to inspect the valuable works of art that had been taken to Liebenthal. Here, too, they were no longer safe. They were now taken to a mountain-hut in the Riesen Gebirge. On the way Russian planes attempted to bomb the huge lorries containing the works of art, but fortunately missed their target.

After the capitulation the works of art fell into the hands of the Russians. The priest at Liebenthal wrote and informed us of this fact which was later corroborated by the Polish conservator in Warsaw, who visited Leubus in the autumn of 1945. The Polish Government had, however, safely stored the cases containing the works of art in Cracow, and it was intended to return them to the monastery-church at Leubus. Whether the church will be Polish or still German by the time they are returned, heaven alone knows! As I was not present when the Polish conservator visited Leubus I forwarded him a list of all the works of art. At that time the monastery-church was being used as a food-depot for the Russian army. The small Protestant church had been previously used for the same purpose. It is situated on the square in front of the monastery. Owing to the fact that part of the roof and the vaulting had been damaged and destroyed by fire, it proved unsuitable as a storage depot.

One of the most regrettable incidents was the following: When the church was turned into a food-depot the Russian commanding officer, who was utterly lacking in any feeling of reverence, gave orders that more than two hundred coffins containing the remains of monks were to be removed from the vault. And the German inhabitants had already been forced to dig two huge graves in St. Mary's cemetery. The remains contained in eighty of the coffins had, in fact, already been buried in one of these graves. The Russians, however, then desisted from transferring any more remains to the other grave. It was impossible to ascertain whether the remains of the great master, Willmann, were among those which were removed from the coffins in the vault. The monastery coffins which had not been placed in the vault were then used to bury those of the villagers who died of hunger-typhus. This epidemic claimed many victims, and in 1945 there were more than eighty deaths in Leubus. Incidentally, the appearance of St. Mary's cemetery was much spoilt by the addition of a Russian military cemetery within the same burial-ground.

Visitors to Leubus had always liked to visit the six chapels in Hedwigsbusch, and on Sunday afternoons the Catholic inhabitants had walked

along the Way of the Cross and said a prayer at each of the stations. Unfortunately, however, the sandstone sculptures representing the sufferings of Our Lord and Saviour and the Vision of St. Hedwig were very badly damaged by the Russians. In February, 1945, the enemy set up a number of cannon about three hundred yards away from Hedwigsbusch. The gunners in charge of the cannon took up their quarters in the chapels and actually installed stoves and beds there! ... The Russians also committed a further atrocity as regards the monastery-church. When the latter was converted into a food-depot the Russians made German workmen smash the beautiful sandstone sarcophagus of Boleslaus IV in the royal chapel. Incidentally, the sarcophagus had previously been opened by the Russians and desecrated. No doubt the sandstone sculptures at St. John's portal which represented the Madonna and St. John Nepomuk met with the same fate. In any case, they suddenly vanished, apparently because some Russian commanding officer or other could not bear the sight of them. In their stead there was now a huge picture of Stalin at the entrance to the monastery, which was flanked on both sides by two large paintings depicting the Russian army, — one painting depicted an infantry attack, and the other the three chiefs of the Red Army, representing the air force, the infantry, and the navy. Above St. John's portal, which was concealed by the above-mentioned pictures, there hung a red Soviet flag. Thousands of Russian civilians, deserters of the Wlassow Army, and soldiers of the Red Army passed through this portal. At times as many as ten thousand Russians were quartered in the monastery and the monastery-church. In addition, there were about five thousand Russians billeted in Bayer Street and in the cottages on the former horse-breeding farm.

When we were forced to leave Leubus on August 17th, 1946, there were probably still about two thousand Russians there. About a thousand (sappers) were quartered in the monastery and a thousand (artillery) in the building of the former asylum in Leubus-Staedtel. All the finest houses in Leubus, that is in so far as they had not been damaged, were of course occupied by Russian officers. Needless to say, I was obliged to change my residence seven times within fifteen months for this reason.

Report No. 95

The Parish of Moenchmotschelnitz, near Wohlau ¹³⁵

The parish of Moenchmotschelnitz included 300 Catholics (1942) and 417 persons of other denominations (1929). A chapel existed at the castle from 1735 onwards. The present church (The Immaculate Conception) was built during the years 1908 and 1909. Moenchmotschelnitz became a parish on November 25, 1850. Until 1810 Moenchmotschelnitz belonged to the Cistercian Abbey at Leubus.

On Saturday, January 20th, 1945, the news reached us, like a bolt from the blue, that the German troops were withdrawing from the right bank of the Oder and that the inhabitants of Moenchmotschelnitz should

leave the village. Women, children, and old persons, in particular, were requested to leave. People began packing their belongings in all haste, and the first lot of farmers left the same day, to be followed by the rest next day. By Sunday evening there were only thirty of the three hundred inhabitants of the village left. Most of those who remained behind were old persons. The parish-priest also remained in Moenchmotschelnitz as he felt it would not be right to desert his church and his parish, and in any case, the order issued to him by the ecclesiastical council, to the effect that he was to leave when the village was evacuated, did not reach him in time... On January 25th, 1945, at about four o'clock in the afternoon, the first lot of Russian tanks drove into the village.

On Friday morning, January 26th, the main body of the army followed, and infantry, artillery, anti-aircraft units, and supply vehicles passed through Moenchmotschelnitz in a never-ending column and proceeded in the direction of Steinau, that is to say, in the direction of the Oder. Some of the units halted in the village, and the soldiers swarmed into the houses and stole whatever took their fancy. Towards evening Russian soldiers set fire to a number of houses and also to the school for no apparent reason. Later on that same evening Russian troops took up their quarters in the village and also at the vicarage, and stayed for about a fortnight. At the same time, however, there was a constant stream of Russian soldiers passing through the village. On February 8th, for instance, there was only one commanding officer in the village, but troops passing through often took up their quarters there and molested the Germans and robbed them of their possessions. At the instructions of the Russian commanding officer all the Germans had been forced to leave their homes and take up their quarters at the two inns in the village, but even there they were not safe from the Russian soldiers. The Germans had been allowed to keep a few cows and goats, but the rest of the cattle had been driven to Wohlau, and all the pigs and poultry had been killed. At the end of March, 1945, the big estate was turned into a kind of kolchos, which was then stocked with cattle from elsewhere, including more than a hundred cows, the same number of pigs, and also poultry and draught-oxen. The villagers now had to work for the Russians and were forced to live on the estate...

The exterior of the church in Moenchmotschelnitz was not damaged. The organ, however, could no longer be used, and the Russians had wrought havoc among the things which had been stored in the vestry. All the carpets and matting were missing. The chalices and monstrances, and some of the surplices and copes had not been taken. The exterior of the vicarage had likewise not been damaged, with the exception of one or two windows, but there was not much left of the interior fittings, and what little there was, had either been demolished or badly damaged. In fact, this was the case in most of the houses in the village. During the month of June those of the villagers who had fled in January and had for the most part found shelter in Bohemia returned to the village.

Most of them had set out with carts drawn by two horses, but when they returned all they had left was a handcart'...

Hardly had the Russians left the village when the Poles arrived. At first there were about twenty of them, all of them fairly young. They took up their quarters at the various farms and had the Polish militia from the neighbouring village introduce them as the new owners. "I owner, now, you no more to say", was their usual comment to the Germans when they moved in. They claimed the nicest rooms in the house and also full board, but on the whole they were not on hostile terms with the Germans. Conditions changed, however, at the beginning of the year 1946 when the first lot of Poles, who had not been Communist in their attitude, departed, and leftist Poles took their place. Together with the radical elements that had remained, they promptly set about tormenting, terrorizing, and robbing the Germans...

The way they dealt with some of the women of the village who had passed on a rumour to the effect that the Poles would have to leave Moenchmotschelnitz on May 15th, 1945, serves to illustrate their methods. The women concerned were taken to Krehlau by Polish militiamen stationed there and were imprisoned for a day. They were even forced to bend over a form and were beaten with a stick, merely for repeating a rumour! The following incident illustrates the manner in which one Polish mayor, who was a radical, terrorized the Germans. The latter were forced to wear a white band on their sleeve to show that they were Germans. On one occasion a German had omitted to put on his band when he went to evening service at church. Shortly before reaching the church some Poles called to him to stop, but he went in to evening service. When he came out of the church after the service — he had put on his band in the meantime — a number of Poles grabbed hold of him, threw him to the ground, and started kicking him. His sister and his daughter tried to come to his rescue, but were treated in the same manner by the Poles. All three of them were then dragged off to the Polish militia prison at Krehlau and were detained there for three days...

On Wednesday, August 14th, 1945, we were forced to say farewell to our native village. It was sad to think that we were being turned out of our native country, but, on the other hand, all of us were glad to get away from all the turmoil and unrest, from injustice and terrorism, and relieved at the prospect of no longer having to worry as to what might happen to us next day. Even one of the Poles who had formerly worked in Germany for a time said, "I wish I were going with you. There's still law and order in Germany." Contrary to expectation, the Poles actually drove all our luggage, which consisted of sacks, to Wohlau for us...

The Germans who had remained behind in the village in August, 1946, were evacuated to the Russian Occupied Zone of Germany in the middle of December, 1946. Only two German families are said to have remained in Moenchmotschelnitz, or "Moczedlice klaszterno", as it is now called.

*Report No. 96***The Parish of Winzig, near Wohlau**¹³⁶

The parish of Winzig included 930 Catholics (1942) and 5,794 persons of other denominations (1929). A parish-church (St. Michael's) is mentioned in historical records in 1272. From 1530 onwards this church was Protestant. During the years 1696 to 1707, however, it was Catholic again. In the year 1708 a curacy with a church was set up in the west wing of the townhall. The present church was built during the years 1884 to 1886. Winzig became a parish in the year 1866.

... At six o'clock in the morning, on Monday, January 22nd, 1945, we set out on the trek, after having hastily gathered a few belongings together. All the rooms were full of people who had spent the night there. Together with some relatives of ours who had arrived in Winzig from the district of Militsch on the previous day, we trekked as far as Lueben, where we spent the night. From there we proceeded to Krotzenau, where we spent the next night, and from Krotzenau we moved on to Giessmannsdorf, near Sprottau, where a cousin of ours lived. It was a dreadful journey as far as Steinau. The roads were slippery and the horses were worn out with pulling the heavily laden carts. When we reached Steinau we learnt that some persons and horses had been killed there as a train had collided with one of the treks. We had hoped to be far away from the fighting in Giessmannsdorf; in fact, no one had ever expected the Russians to advance into the country as far as they had. All went well in Giessmannsdorf until one Saturday afternoon, when the news went round that we should get out of the village as fast as we could. The Russians had already reached the village next to Giessmannsdorf. We drove to another neighbouring village, but by the time we got there night had fallen and all we could see and hear were the searchlights and the shelling nearby.

Next morning, at about nine o'clock the first lot of Russian tanks drove through the village and proceeded in the direction of Sagan. By eleven o'clock the first lot of Russian infantry had arrived, and the Russian soldiers were robbing the Germans of their possessions, in particular of their rings, watches, and gold jewelry. They searched all our suitcases and stole whatever took their fancy. They even made the menfolk take their boots off, regardless of whether they still possessed a pair of shoes or not. Then they seized hold of some of the women and began raping them. It was dreadful to hear the poor women screaming for help. We rushed out of the house and climbed onto our cart and drove off with the intention of returning to Giessmannsdorf. After having been stopped and molested by the Russians innumerable times on the way, we finally reached the next village by evening. We managed to find accommodation for the night at a large farm, but we had hardly got inside the house when several Russian soldiers, armed to the teeth, rushed into the room, and pointed their revolvers at us. All our possessions were still on the

¹³⁶ s. *Betraege*, Vol I, p. 461.

cart which was out in the farmyard. Next morning we discovered that the Russians had stolen all our belongings. I shall never forget what a dreadful feeling it was to think that we were now reduced to beggary. They even deprived us of our horses. We remained at the farm all that day, for the village was teeming with Russian soldiers, who seemed to shoot up out of the ground like mushrooms! We spent a dreadful night there, and next morning I told my husband that I didn't intend to stay there any longer. Things always seem much worse when you are in a strange house. We set off for Giessmannsdorf. We trudged along field-paths in a terrible snowstorm and finally reached Giessmannsdorf late in the afternoon. We only managed to get as far as the beginning of the village, however, — the village extends for practically two miles — as we were so exhausted. Next evening some Russians dragged me into a dark cellar and searched me, and I am sure that it was only my rosary that saved me from suffering a worse fate and from being killed. I never thought we should survive that night. Nineteen persons died in the village that night; some of them were shot by the Russians, whilst others committed suicide. In the course of the weeks that followed, thirty-eight persons died in Giessmannsdorf.

The suffering and hardship we were forced to endure during the weeks that followed are indescribable. My husband was forced to work for the Russians and had to help remove all the furniture from the houses and load it onto lorries. We later found an untenanted farm with about 180 acres of land and managed to catch some stray cattle. In this way we had something to keep us busy and I was thus spared having to work for the Russians. Whenever Russian soldiers came to the farm during the day I used to hide, but as soon as it grew dark I lived in fear and trembling of what they would do to us. We were forced to leave all the doors open at night, and if the Russians came along and found any of them locked, they simply smashed them to bits. On two occasions the Russians raided the house and were going to abduct my husband. I prayed aloud to God to help us, and He heard my prayer. God protected us on so many occasions, otherwise we should never have survived all the hardships we had to endure. We kept intending to return to Winzig, but everyone warned us that a journey of this kind — it was 63 miles by road — was extremely dangerous and risky, especially for women, as so many of them were raped. I was particularly fortunate in this respect as my husband could speak Polish. During the first few weeks after the Russian invasion I never had a wash nor combed my hair, so as to look an ugly sight. In any case, we looked rather a sight as it was, for both of us had lost about three stone. Not a day passed without the Russians raiding the house and robbing us. As long as I live I shall always remember May 6th, 1945, Whit Monday evening, and many other occasions, too. The sight of a Russian in the early morning was enough to put one off one's food for the rest of the day. The weeks seemed to pass so very slowly. We kept hoping the Russians would leave, but they stayed on. By September, 1945, we felt we had come to the end of our powers of endurance and so we decided to leave Silesia. We had no food,

and we had been deprived of practically all our possessions. In fact, for the past few weeks we had not even had any salt. We gathered the last of our belongings together and set out on our journey. When we got to the Neisse line the Poles made us get out of the train and then robbed us of the rest of our belongings. We were reduced to beggary. There was no train for three days and we were obliged to wait about. We were utterly despondent. Had it not been for our faith in God and the thought of our children, I think we should probably have committed suicide, for we had reached the end of our strength. After spending three days and three nights at the frontier, we arrived here on September 17th, 1945.

The churches in Winzig (both the Catholic and the Protestant one) survived the Russian invasion, as did the Catholic vicarage in Winzig. The beautiful Catholic church in Gross-Schmograu was demolished. The hospital in Winzig and the district sanatorium were badly damaged.¹³⁷

Report No. 97

The Parish of Gross-Peterwitz, near Neumarkt¹³⁸

The parish of Gross-Peterwitz included 1,172 Catholics (1942) and 998 persons of other denominations (1929). The church (St. Katherine's) is mentioned in a charter of 1298. The choir of the present church dates from the second half of the fifteenth century. The nave was built in 1753 and the tower in 1860. The chapel of ease at Pohlisdorf (St. Peter's and St. Paul's) is mentioned in historical records in 1329. The present church is said to have existed as early as 1419. The presbytery was extended in 1813. The chapel of ease at Schoebekirch (St. Bartholomew's) is mentioned in historical records as the parish-church in 1308. The present church was built in 1797.

On February 9th, 1945, the Russians invaded Gross-Peterwitz. On the very same day the Catholic priest was forced to leave the vicarage for good. The house was turned into a field-hospital and the cellars were used as a prison. In September, 1946, Russian soldiers threw the rest of the furniture in the house out of the windows. The records of the parish archives met with the same fate. Some of the records could be saved and were deposited in the cupboards in the vestry. The parochial registers from 1772 onwards had been preserved in the parish archives. Most of these valuable documents were destroyed by the Russians in February, 1945.

From February 9th, 1945, onwards the parish-priest, the Sisters of Charity, and the inhabitants of the village who had remained behind were forced to live in the cellar at the castle for three weeks. It was like being in the catacombs in the early days of Christianity. We celebrated

¹³⁷ Cf. *Heimatklaenge*, messages addressed to the former inhabitants of Winzig, Silesia. Edited by J. Willinek, Doveren, near Erkelenz. Cf. also J. Willinek, *Traute Heimat, Bilder aus Winzig, Bez. Breslau, und seiner Umgebung*. 1948.

¹³⁸ s. *Beitraege*, Vol II, p. 168 ff.

mass down there and made our offerings to God, and in this way we fortified ourselves against all the atrocities we were forced to endure during the day and at night. On the first Sunday in Lent we were unable to celebrate mass, however, as the Russians molested and robbed us all day long without a break, from five o'clock in the morning until ten o'clock at night.

Later on, the priest tried to hold services in the church, but words fail to describe the dreadful condition the church was in every morning, after we had spent the previous day tidying and cleaning it up. For many weeks the church was used as a cinema by the Russians. After the capitulation, however, things changed. We tidied up the church once more and were then allowed to hold services undisturbed. Now and again Russians raided the church, but the damage done was only slight. The sight of the interior of the church, clean and decorated with flowers as in former times, once more filled the hearts of the parishioners with joy. The organ had been damaged beyond repair by the first lot of Russians who invaded Gross-Peterwitz. They had smashed the bellows, pulled out the wires, and removed all the display pipes and most of the other pipes. The organ was later replaced by the harmonium which had been at the vicarage and was retrieved from the Russians. We also managed to save all the finest vestments belonging to the parish-church at Gross-Peterwitz.

The chapel of ease at Schoebekirch was not damaged at all during the Russian invasion, nor were any of the vestments removed. The organ, too, was undamaged. As orders were issued to the priests and to members of religious orders by the archiepiscopal vicariate-general in January, 1945, to the effect that they were to remain where they were, the parish-priest, the Gray Sisters, and the inmates of the charity institution remained in Gross-Peterwitz. The majority of the villagers had fled to Wueste-Waltersdorf and did not return to Gross-Peterwitz until after the capitulation, namely in the middle of May. It is impossible to describe the dreadful weeks and months of suffering, hardship, and misery we lived through. We had hoped to render our native province and our fatherland a service by our brave endurance, and we were therefore all the more dismayed when the inhabitants of one village after another were expelled.

After divine service on the Feast of the Rosary — about one hundred persons took Holy Communion — some Polish militiamen appeared and informed us that the five German nuns at the charity institution, the priest, and his sister must leave Gross-Peterwitz by seven o'clock the same evening. That was on October 6th, 1946. On October 12th, 1946, we arrived in Hanover and were given accommodation in an air-raid shelter...

*Report No. 98***Pohlsdorf, near Neumarkt**¹³⁹

Pohlsdorf is part of the parish of Gross-Peterwitz and has a chapel of ease (see last Report)

With the exception of the stone slab, the high altar in the chapel of ease at Pohlsdorf was completely destroyed by the Russians. And the organ met with the same fate. The vestments were found hanging on various garden-fences in the village. The chalice and monstrance, as well as one ciborium and a reliquary were stolen. The tombs in the vault of St. Mary's Chapel had been broken open and ransacked.

The exterior of the chapel of ease at Pohlsdorf also suffered considerable damage. German troops had used the tower for military operations, with the result that the Russian units in Gross-Peterwitz had shelled the chapel and the tower in Pohlsdorf. The roof of the chapel and also the tower were badly damaged. A small house belonging to the chapel and adjoining it was likewise badly damaged by shells. Russian soldiers set fire to the old school in Pohlsdorf.

*Report No. 99***The Parish of Schmellwitz, near Neumarkt**¹⁴⁰

The parish of Schmellwitz included 973 Catholics (1942) and 614 persons of other denominations (1929). The church (St Martin's) is mentioned in historical records in 1353. The present church dates from the fourteenth or the fifteenth century. The chapel of ease at Illnisch (St Anne's) is mentioned in historical records in 1353. The old wooden church was demolished in 1875. The new church was consecrated in 1874.

... The events which happened during the months which elapsed between the Russian invasion and the expulsion of the Germans are briefly as follows: February 11th, 1945, Russian troops captured the village. Divine service was held for the last time in Schmellwitz. February 13th, 1945, the vicarage in Schmellwitz had to be evacuated. February 18th, 1945, found accommodation at the convent in Ramfeld. February 27th, 1945, arrested by the Russians and taken by lorry to Neumarkt, and from there on foot, via Dyhernfurth and Trebnitz, to Trachenberg. April 1st, 1945, released by the Russians and returned to Neumarkt (met Father Klehr of Striegau there for the last time) via Prausnitz, Kloster Heinen-dorf, and Dyhernfurth. April 3rd, 1945, arrived in Ramfeld. April 8th, 1945, Low Sunday: divine service held for the first time since the Russian invasion and from then onwards regularly until our expulsion on October 17th, 1946.

¹³⁹ s. *Beitraege*, Vol II, p. 169.

¹⁴⁰ s. *Beitraege*, Vol III, p. 195 ff

... Fortunately none of the churches were damaged during the war. The church at Ramfeld was hit by a shell, but the damage done was only slight. The vicarage in Schmellwitz, however, which had been built in 1936 and 1937 and had cost 25,000 Reichsmarks, was unfortunately destroyed by fire on February 20th, 1945, together with the adjoining school. All the parochial files were destroyed when the vicarage burnt down, with the exception of the church-records and the chronicles of the parish, which I had removed to the vestry prior to the arrival of the Russian troops. The parish-registers of births, marriages, and deaths for the year 1945 were also destroyed during the fire as they had been kept at the vicarage in order to record new entries.

However regrettable the loss of all these records may be, it was nothing compared to the much greater loss of the Breslau State Library, which had been moved to the castle at Ramfeld for safety. For months people used candles that they had made themselves out of the wax seals on documents. Valuable folios and ancient handwritten manuscripts of the Bible, etc., were left lying about for many weeks and ruined, until they were finally removed on lorries. Library-books with the names of the borrowers in them lay scattered here and there in the parks at Ramfeld and Illnisch. On one occasion a Russian officer proudly showed me a valuable Homer edition he had found and asked me to translate and explain it to him. As we were part of the Breslau fighting sector it was impossible to attempt to salvage all the books that lay strewn about in the open, and, in any case, I had nowhere to store them as I moved into five different quarters in Ramfeld within five days, after I was released from captivity by the Russians...

Most of the things in the churches were preserved, that is to say many of the things were found again, as for instance most of the chalices and all the monstrances. Many a thing had quite an unusual fate. Thanks to the care and vigilance of the parishioners much could be rescued. The mass vestments had to be pieced together again according to the various parts and colours, but eventually each church was once more supplied with the necessary vestments. Mr. T. and Mr. H. repaired the organs, and, with considerable skill, Mr. H., the teacher, actually managed to repair the tower-clock in Ramfeld, an achievement which was greatly appreciated by all the inhabitants. Divine service was held for the first time again on Low Sunday in Ramfeld, and a little later the other churches, too, were able to hold services again. There was never any disturbance at all during the services, despite the fact that they were always attended by numerous Russian soldiers. On the contrary, on the day of the armistice I was instructed to hold a thanksgiving service and the parishioners were given a general holiday. We held this service to our own liking, and, in view of all the sacrifices made by our people during the past years and right up to the very end, we prayed for a just and tolerable peace...

*Report No. 100***The Parish of Brosewitz, near Strehlen¹⁴¹**

The parish of Brosewitz included 860 Catholics (1942) and 1,437 persons of other denominations (1929). The church (St Jacob the Elder's) is mentioned in historical records in 1315. The present church was probably built in the fifteenth century and rebuilt in 1725. The tower also dates from the year 1725. Until 1810 Brosewitz belonged to the sinecure of the Order of the Knights of Malta at Klein-Oels.

At the beginning of May, 1945, practically all the families domiciled in Brosewitz set out on the journey back to the village. We were constantly robbed and molested by Russians on the way, but eventually reached Brosewitz by about the beginning of June, 1945. We found the village sadly changed. Several barns had been destroyed by fire and a number of houses had been badly damaged. The church, too, had been damaged. The tower of the church (consisting of two round turrets) was still standing, but had been hit by several shells. One of the bells in the tower, however, was still intact. The tower-clock had been smashed. Part of the roof of the church had been lifted off, but apart from this and the fact that most of the windows had been smashed, the rest of the building had not been damaged.

The interior of the church was in a state of complete chaos. Apparently it had been used as a cinema or theatre. The tabernacle had been forced open, some of the pictures representing the stations of the Cross and some of the statuettes of angels had been removed and placed at the entrance to the church. The statue of St. Joseph had been smashed, the keys were missing from the statue of St. Peter, and the sword was missing from the statue of St. Paul. Some of the pews had been removed, and the head of a large statue of an angel which stood by the altar had been hewn off. The wainscoting round the altar had been broken. A number of holes had been made in the floor and the walls, indicating that the Russians had apparently been searching for valuables. The vestry was a dreadful sight. The cupboards had been overturned, all the sacred linen was missing, and the vestments had been cut to pieces and strewn all over the village, in ditches, and on dung-heaps in farmyards. The cover of the missal which had only recently been acquired and several other important books had been cut to pieces, and the organ had been ruined...

All the buildings belonging to the vicarage-farm were undamaged. The vicarage was still habitable, although most of the windows had been smashed and the whole place looted. The archives, registers, church-records, the Borromean library, and the private library belonging to the parish-priest lay scattered about in ditches, together with broken crockery, rotting clothes, beds, old shoes, and bones, and were exposed to the effects of the weather for months on end. Much that was valuable and irreplaceable was destroyed in this manner. The monstrances and chalices

¹⁴¹ s. *Bettraege*, Vol I, p. 91 ff

were dented and broken, and parts of them were missing. Both the stables and also the barn had been hit by shells and badly damaged. Practically all the trees in the vicarage-garden had been felled. Services were soon held again in the church for those of the Catholic parishioners who had returned to the village. We repaired the roof of the church with bricks off the roof of the barn...

The inhabitants who had returned were now at the mercy of the Poles who began to settle in the village and of the Russians who were leaving. The Poles claimed the right of ownership for themselves. The former owners were given makeshift accommodation, either in their own or in a strange house, and were deprived of any cattle they might still have and of all the crops and garden-produce they harvested. They were thus without even the barest necessities of life. The months during which they were subjected to the lawlessness and injustices of the Polish administrative authorities will remain unforgettable in the memories of the Germans. — The fact must also be mentioned that a number of persons were killed as a result of driving over mines which exploded. Two children who found some shells and started playing with them were also killed when the latter exploded. The typhus epidemic also claimed many victims, in particular young women and adolescents.

At two o'clock in the afternoon of August 10th, 1946, the Poles informed the Germans that they were being expelled from the country and had to be ready to start in three hours' time, that is to say by five p.m. The first lot of Germans to be expelled were families who still possessed some property, whilst the agricultural workers who were to help bring in the harvest were allowed to remain and were not expelled until October and December, 1946. The expellees were only allowed to take as many of their possessions as they could carry. They were not allowed to use handcarts. All they took with them as a rule were a few belongings they had hurriedly managed to collect together, consisting for the most part of bedding, clothes, and kitchen utensils. They were only allowed to take 500 Reichsmarks with them. We reached Strehlen in the evening. From here we were to travel by train, but we were obliged to spend the night of August 10th, out in the open. On August 11th, the Poles searched all our luggage, and emptied the contents of our sacks, baskets, and suitcases out into the middle of the road. Whatever took their fancy they simply stole.

Report No. 101

The Parish of Markt Bohrau, near Strehlen¹⁴²

The parish of Markt Bohrau included 1,412 Catholics (1942) and 4,775 persons of other denominations (1929). A church (St Wolfgang's) already existed prior to 1200. The present church was built before 1666. The vaulting dates from the eighteenth century.

On January 13th, 1946, at half-past eight in the evening, a Polish militiaman, armed with a gun, appeared at the vicarage and ordered

¹⁴² s. *Beitraege*, Vol III, p. 187 ff

me to go along to the headquarters of the commanding officer with him. Attired in my soutane and biretta, I went with him. Upon our arrival at the headquarters of the militia I was immediately taken to a cell and locked in. Half an hour later the same militiaman who had come for me at the vicarage took me to the interrogation-room. I was now interrogated by the commanding officer and a militiaman who was completely intoxicated. There were also several other militiamen present in the room as well as a man in a brown uniform (like the uniform worn by the wjzt, or police superintendent).

My interrogation consisted in the first place of the Poles accusing me of two offences. Firstly, I was reproached with having upbraided the Polish priest for being unpunctual, and secondly, I was accused of holding classes in the cellar at the vicarage. In answer to the first charge I said that it was my duty as the parish-priest to see that all services were held punctually at the hour arranged. I added that I had requested the Polish priest every week to begin and end his services punctually so as not to interfere with the times fixed for the services which followed, but that he had taken no notice whatsoever of my request. On January 13th, he had once again failed to finish his service at the appointed time and had gone on for half an hour longer, thus making it impossible for me to begin my service at the time fixed. For this reason I had afterwards pointed out to him in the vestry, in the presence of the nun, who was in charge of the vestry, and the Polish verger, that such a state of affairs was untenable.

The militia officer, who hardly listened to what I was saying, merely replied that Germans had to wait, even if the Polish service finished two hours later.

In answer to the second charge I explained that it was my duty as the parish-priest to hold confirmation-classes for school-children, and that parents were publicly invited in church to send their children to these classes. I added that in summer the classes were held in church, in winter in some room or other that could be heated, and that this winter the only room which had been available had been the former vicarage-chapel, which was on the ground floor of the vicarage and had three windows which looked out onto the yard.

Whilst I was explaining all this the commanding officer kept telling the drunken "interpreter" silly jokes and paid no attention at all to what I was saying. Suddenly, however, he fired a question at me, — "Where is Klose?"

Klose was a farmer who lived in Ottwitz and was a member of my parish. At the end of August or beginning of September, 1945, he and two other farmers in Ottwitz had been arrested by the Polish militia because of statements made about them to the police by a woman of ill repute. As I knew that Klose had never been a member of the National Socialist Party and as Ukrainian women who had formerly worked on his farm had told me that he had always treated them very well, I

went to the commanding officer and interceded on Klose's behalf, with the result that he was then released. Two months later, at about the beginning of November, 1945, Klose had suddenly left Ottwitz because a Pole, who had formerly worked on the farm and whom Klose had reprimanded for laziness in those days, had unexpectedly appeared at the farm and Klose was afraid he might now take revenge. The Polish commanding officer was now asking me where Klose was, but I was not in touch with the latter at all, so how could I know! The tortures the Poles then subjected me to were intended to force me to answer.

They made me take off my soutane and also my spectacles and then strapped me onto a leather couch. They threw a fur over my head so that no one outside should hear my screams. Then four or five militiamen started belabouring me with rubber truncheons and similar instruments until the whole of my body, from my shoulders down to my feet, was sore and smarting. This form of torture was repeated several times. At intervals — they beat me to make me stand up — the commanding officer kept repeating his question, "Where is Klose?" In the meantime the so-called interpreter kept hitting me in the face and saying that I had been a member of the S.S., a partisan, etc. Then they shouted, "Lie down!" and repeated the same procedure again, at least four times.

By the time they had finished with me I was hardly able to stand. I was then told to put on my soutane and the guard took me into the kitchen to get washed. My face and my ears were covered with blood. After this I was then locked up in the cellar again. The cellar-window was broken, and I lay on the floor, racked with pain and shivering with cold, until I finally fainted. About an hour later the guard appeared and shook me until I came to, and then took me back to the interrogation-room again. I was no longer able to stand and kept collapsing. Every time I collapsed the Poles handed me some water to revive me. They now interrogated me about the Protestant parishioners. After torturing me in this manner for half an hour, during which time they would not even allow me to sit down, they finally released me at about midnight. I dragged myself home as best as I could and when I reached the vicarage I collapsed. The Poles had told me to appear at the militia headquarters next day at noon with Klose, otherwise they would repeat their treatment. But my condition by that time was such that I was too ill to appear there.

Next morning I received the extreme unction as my heart was in such a bad state that I was hardly expected to live. I was confined to bed for eight weeks until I was finally able to resume my duties again, and then only to a very limited degree.

I am willing to testify to the above statements on oath, any time.

*Report No. 102***The Parish of Alt-Altmannsdorf, near Frankenstein ¹⁴³**

The parish of Alt-Altmannsdorf included 1,544 Catholics (1942) and 350 persons of other denominations (1929). A chapel (St John the Baptist's) is mentioned in historical records in 1359. The present church (St Hedwig's) was probably built during the Middle Ages. It was renovated in 1778. Alt-Altmannsdorf was part of the parish of Baitzen until January 25, 1890, when it became an independent parish. Until 1810 Alt-Altmannsdorf belonged to the Cistercian Abbey at Kamenz.

From May 7th to 8th, 1945, a German division staff was billeted at the vicarage in Alt-Altmannsdorf... From May 8th, onwards we were forced to endure indescribable sufferings and hardships. At five o'clock in the morning, on May 8th, the last of the German officers left the vicarage and we were now left to our own fate.

At half-past seven the same morning the Russians began shelling the village. The church was hit by four shells — three went into the tower and one into the roof. The vicarage was hit thirteen times. We were sheltering in the cellar and kept expecting the whole house to collapse any minute. Incidentally, we later discovered several holes in the walls of the rooms upstairs in the house. Whilst we were sheltering in the cellar the telephone suddenly rang upstairs. My niece went to answer it, and as she passed through one of the rooms downstairs caught sight of a revolver, which one of the German officers had apparently forgotten to take with him. Thereupon she promptly threw it into the cess-pool. In a little while the first lot of Russian tanks, numbering about eighty-five, started passing through the village. We immediately hung white flags out of the windows and had just finished doing so when the first lot of Russians arrived at the vicarage. That was at half-past eight in the morning...

Thousands of Russians passed through the village on their way to Kamenz where about two thousand were garrisoned, and we lived in constant fear and trembling of what they might do to us. For six whole weeks my niece used to sit on the edge of her bed every night, fully clothed, so as to be able to escape through the window, as soon as the Russians came to the door. There was never a moment's peace either during the day or at night. On the very first day that the Russians arrived in Alt-Altmannsdorf we were robbed of four watches, all our best clothes, which we had stowed away in five large suitcases, and three bicycles. — The house was a dreadful sight; every room had been ransacked, the contents of all the cupboards and drawers had been scattered about all over the place, and the Russians had stolen whatever had taken their fancy. It was no good locking the doors as they simply smashed them to get in.

From May 8th, 1945, onwards, for the next fortnight, the Russians were allowed to do as much pillaging as they liked. Even after this

¹⁴³ s. *Beitrag*e, Vol III, p. 416 ff.

officially proclaimed period had elapsed they still continued to pillage. Girls and women were constantly at the mercy of the Russian soldiers, particularly when the latter were drunk. They not only raped women and girls indoors but also out in ditches and by the wayside, and as a rule not once but several times. Sometimes a whole bunch of soldiers would seize hold of one woman and all rape her. And one Russian soldier even went so far as to stop a thirteen-year old schoolboy on the street, lift him up onto his horse, and make him ride through the village with him and point out the houses in which there were girls.

The Poles arrived in the village the middle of July, 1945, and a new wave of looting and stealing set in. Most of us were reduced to beggary and all we possessed were a few shabby and tattered clothes. It was hardly surprising that the Poles robbed us as they did, since Polish clergymen actually preached in their services that it was not a sin for the Poles to rob the Germans but merely retaliation.

The most dreadful day we experienced during the whole of these months was November 28th, 1945, when most of the inhabitants of the village were expelled by the Poles within half an hour's time. No one had had any idea previously that this was going to happen. I had to officiate at a Polish wedding that day, and whilst I was doing so about thirty Polish militiamen raided and looted the vicarage. The Polish priest from Baitzen¹⁴⁴ also took part in the looting. My niece was obliged to cook dinner for them, and when she had finished they bawled, "Now get out as quick as you can. You've all got to be out of the house in ten minutes!" My niece rushed across to the church to fetch me, and a few minutes later we were lined up at the collecting point in front of the vicarage, ready to leave. All they had let us take with us was a small rucksack. At the last moment, however, just before we all set off, the Polish commanding officer arrived and sent us back to the vicarage. We were then allowed to remain there until the same fate finally befell us on April 11th, 1946, and we were forced to leave our beloved country for good.

Report No. 103

The Parish of Frankenberg, near Frankenstein¹⁴⁵

The parish of Frankenberg included 2,066 Catholics (1942) and 216 persons of other denominations (1929). The church (St Anne's) is mentioned in historical records in 1230. The present church dates from the fourteenth century and was rebuilt during the years 1802 and 1803. There is still some indication of the Gothic style. Until 1810 it belonged to the Cistercian Abbey at Kamenz.

... On Sunday, May 6th, 1945, a meeting was held in the village and the local group leader of the National Socialist Party announced that orders had been received from higher quarters that the official authori-

¹⁴⁴ He had settled in Baitzen after the capitulation

¹⁴⁵ s. *Beitraege*, Vol. I, p. 232 ff and p. 239 ff.

ties were to cease to operate and to leave the village on Monday morning at seven o'clock. This meant the end of the government! The villagers remained in Frankenberg. On Monday, news of the capitulation of Breslau was broadcast, and the villagers were most relieved to think that Frankenberg was now no longer in danger of becoming part of the fighting zone, as the fighting front still proceeded north of Strehlen. During the night some of Schoerner's troops passed through the village on their retreat. A number of treks, consisting of farmers and their families, also passed through Frankenberg... Next afternoon, from half-past two onwards, the Russians swarmed into the village. They requisitioned all the horses, raided and looted all the houses, even those that were untenanted, and robbed the inhabitants of their food supplies, their watches, and their wireless sets. We spent a dreadful night from May 8th to May 9th. Russian soldiers and foreign workers, who had been in the employ of Germans during the war, raided and looted the houses and raped the womenfolk. Exactly how many women and girls suffered this dreadful fate is not known. Many of them were treated in a most atrocious manner... In the course of the weeks that followed, the new mayor, who was himself a Communist, clearly showed that he preferred any Communist Russian or Pole to a German farmer or German subject. On one occasion, for instance, he went to the various houses in the village and tried to find two German women who would be willing to spend the night with two Russian officers...

The village suffered considerable damage as a result of the billeting. In addition to looting the houses in which they were quartered, the Russian soldiers also rounded up all the cattle, and each farmer was only allowed to keep one cow, irrespective of the size of his farm. And the Communist mayor, who, incidentally, called himself a German, actually went so far as to give the Russian soldiers a written statement to the effect that the farmers had handed over all their cattle voluntarily...

In May a Polish sheriff settled in Frankenstein. Gradually all the German notices and names of streets in the village disappeared and were replaced by Polish ones. On the strength of the Potsdam Agreement the Poles set up their notorious system of administration in August. It would be more correct to describe it as a system of terrorization. The conception which the Poles who were devout Catholics had of their resettlement in Silesia can be seen from the fact that most of them, when they moved into German farms, exclaimed, "This day always a holiday!" (Incidentally, they observed this holiday most religiously and punctually.) The rest of the Poles when moving into farms belonging to Germans simply stated, "Now I owner, you work for me!" The same scenes were enacted everywhere. The Poles made the Germans hand over all the clothes and linen they took a fancy to, as well as all the keys of the house. Upon moving in they also searched the place from top to bottom. The Germans were not allowed to remove any potatoes or any grain from the farm without first obtaining the permission of the Poles... A number of persons were killed in Frankenberg and the surrounding

villages. One of the farmers in Frankenberg was shot by the Russians when they seized the village. A young girl in the village was also shot by the Russians, but it was never ascertained whether she was shot by accident or for some other reason. A Polish militiaman who was drunk shot a German railway-official in his office. The Pole was apparently never punished for what he had done. Some of the Germans, incidentally, were of the opinion that the German met with a just fate, since he had told the Poles where to find supplies of coal and oil which had been hidden for safety. Adolf Schramm, a farmer in Hartha, and a man who was a refugee were also murdered in a most brutal manner. They had been assigned to patrol duty in the village one night. Next morning one of the farmers discovered that a cow had been stolen during the night. The two Germans had vanished without a trace, and it was not until a fortnight later that their bodies, riddled with bullets, were found near Baumgarten. No attempt whatsoever was made to trace the murderer, — a fact which goes to prove how utterly lawless the Polish administrative system was!

During the month of July five male corpses were washed up onto the banks of the Neisse within a fortnight. Their sole attire was a shirt, pants, and socks. All five had bullet wounds in the head. Human lives were regarded as entirely worthless by these barbarous hordes from the steppes. They were so utterly lacking in all humane feeling that they did not even trouble to ascertain who the men were that they had murdered, so that the relatives of the latter could be informed...

On May 8th, 1945, the day the Russians invaded Frankenberg, the priest had left the tabernacle, which was empty, open so that the valuable carved door would not be damaged, should any attempts be made to open it. The iron door leading to the vestry, however, remained locked. The sacred vessels and most of the vestments were at the vicarage. Soon after the Russians had entered the village, a Russian soldier, accompanied by a former foreign worker, walked into the church and tried to force open the iron door leading to the vestry with an axe. But his efforts proved in vain, and for the rest of the day no one bothered to enter the church.

It was not until the Wednesday, May 9th, that the church showed traces of having been visited by Bolsheviks, and the latter were probably foreign workers rigged out in some kind of fanciful uniform, which was not that of the Russian army. Two men, wearing caps with a red star on them, and accompanied by two Slav-looking girls, appeared at the vicarage, with the obvious intention of looting the house. The priest, attired in his gown, promptly ushered them out again. Half an hour later, however, the interior of the church presented a dreadful sight. The cover had been removed from the pulpit and was lying on the floor. The large silver candelabra on St. Mary's altar had been hurled to the ground, and the marauders had aimed the candles at the high altar. The candles had of course been smashed to bits and lay scattered about on the altar-cloth and the altar-steps. Fortunately, none of the altar-cans was

smashed, nor was the valuable carving on the tabernacle door (The Lord's Supper) damaged. The metal crucifix on the side-altar had been smashed and was lying on the floor. Obviously one of the marauders must have got hold of it by its base and hurled it onto the floor as hard as he could, otherwise it would not have been smashed to bits.

Next afternoon Russian officers were observed leaving the church, carrying something or other. They had removed part of the cover on the communion-table. The rest of the cover was found in the front pew in a tattered condition. They had also removed the red cover on the Sacred Heart altar. Cigarette-ends lay scattered about on the floor. We later ascertained that further damage had also been done. There is an altar near the porch dedicated to the memory of those who were killed during the first World War. On it there is a wooden tabernacle, often used during Passion Week to keep the consecrated bread and wine in. Holes had been bored in the door of the tabernacle, apparently with a bayonet. We failed to discover who had committed this act of sacrilege or when it had been committed. Incidentally, the same thing was done with the altar in the small chapel at Duerrhartha. In the chapel at Pilz the metal casing of the large crucifix in the apse was riddled with bullets.

Report No. 104

Heinrichswalde, near Frankenstein¹⁴⁶

The parish of Heinrichswalde included 1,055 Catholics (1942) and 25 persons of other denominations (1929). A church (Assumption of the Virgin Mary) is mentioned in historical records in 1325. The present church was built in the baroque style after the first church had been destroyed by fire. Until 1810 Heinrichswalde belonged to the Cistercian Abbey at Kamenz.

February 14th, 1945. Ash Wednesday. Crowds thronged the church. They included many refugees, who had found accommodation in the village, a number of persons staying in Heinrichswalde, and several children of the parish. Many of the grown-ups were unable to attend the service as they could not leave their farms. "Remember, o man, that thou art dust."

In the evening, orders were issued that the entire village was to be evacuated. Everyone was in a state of panic. It was cold and dismal weather, and the ground was covered with snow. It was reported that the Party district administration in Frankenstein was going to make Heinrichswalde its headquarters.

Tuesday, May 8th, 1945. Early in the morning we were informed that everybody in the village must be prepared to flee, as the German Army was likely to capitulate. From the early hours of the morning onwards German troops, coming from Kamenz, passed through Heinrichswalde in

¹⁴⁶ s. *Beitraege*, Vol II, p. 514 ff.

a never-ending stream, and proceeded in the direction of Glatz. Most of the villagers now left as quickly as they could. Those who possessed some kind of a vehicle loaded it up with their most valuable possessions and with food supplies, and fled in the direction of the Pusch. Many of the inhabitants hurriedly buried their most valuable possessions in the ground. Apart from the persons at the vicarage there were only a few farmers left in the village. By midday all was quiet again after the confusion caused by the flight of the villagers, and Heinrichswalde seemed deserted. At about half-past three in the afternoon, two German soldiers came to the vicarage and asked me for the keys of the church, as a look-out post was to be set up in the tower. It was dreadful to think that the church might suffer damage in the very last stage of the war. I went into the church with them and we climbed up to the top of the tower. Here I proved to them that it was futile to set up a look-out post in the tower, since the latter was so low and the view so obstructed by the projecting roof of the church, that one could not even see the street leading to the lower end of the village. I then took them to the slope on which the churchyard is situated. There is a view of the lower end of the village from here. The two soldiers admitted that I had been right.

After this incident I walked up and down at the back of the churchyard and read my breviary, amidst the stillness and tranquillity of the beautiful mountain-landscape. It was not long, however, before someone came to tell me that the Russians were approaching the village. It was about five o'clock in the afternoon when the Russians entered the village. We stood in the vicarage-garden and watched them approach, — soldiers on bicycles, and then an endless column of tanks. Suddenly the sound of a shot resounded from the upper end of the village. A Russian had been killed by a bullet fired by the German soldiers who were on the look-out post up in the mountain pass. The Russians promptly fired back. All the windows at the Eichner Mill were smashed by the force of the Russian shells as they exploded. Johns' Farm, near the mountain pass, was also hit and damaged.

In the evening, all those living at the vicarage assembled in church for evening prayer. When we returned to the vicarage there was a Russian soldier standing in front of the house. Dieter S., who had picked up a smattering of Russian from some Russian prisoners-of-war, talked to him. And with the aid of Polish we managed to understand each other. The Russian told us to stay indoors during the night and not to allow anyone to enter. — I had previously removed the tabernacle from the church and had put it in my study at the vicarage, and during the night we often knelt in prayer in front of it. At two o'clock in the morning, armistice was declared. War was over.

May 9th, 1945. Next morning and during the days that followed I went through the village, from house to house. The houses which had been untenanted when the Russians entered the village were in a state of complete chaos. The doors had been forced open and all the windows smashed. All the cupboards had been opened and searched. There was a

pile of all sorts of objects and foodstuffs lying on the floor in most of the rooms. Jam had been daubed all over the walls. Glasses containing preserves had either been emptied or smashed to bits. Everything of any value had been stolen. At Hillmann's inn the whole place was full of feathers. The Russians had slit the feather beds and had then wrapped the body of the Russian soldier, who had been killed, in the red bed-ticking and buried him in the front-garden. Ukrainians began looting the houses that were untenanted. Russian patrols hunted down all the persons who had sought shelter in the woods and made them return to the village. The carts belonging to the persons who returned to the village were searched and looted. All the motor-cars in the village were promptly confiscated by the Russians. Orders were issued that any person found living out in the open would be regarded as a partisan and shot on the spot. In a very short time all the inhabitants had returned to the village. Some of them, however, on their return were not allowed to enter their houses. They had to wait until the carts and lorries loaded with booty had driven away before they were given permission to enter. All the booty was removed to houses that were untenanted, as for instance the house belonging to Family Geissler, and these houses were used as a kind of collecting point...

May 11th, 1945. The first Soviet assembly in the village was held on the square in front of the school. Wilhelm, the Russian commissary, issued the following orders:

"Germany has lost the war. Peace has been declared. All firearms, ammunition, and wireless sets must be handed over. Motor-lorries, motor-cars, motor cycles, and telephones must be registered. The black-out will cease. All Germans are to return to their place of employment. They will not be harmed in any way. Only those guilty of some crime will be called to account. Curfew lasts from 10 o'clock at night until 5 o'clock in the morning. During these hours no German may be out in the streets."

When I went along to see Mr. Schubert, the mayor, they were just loading all the wireless sets that had been confiscated into a large limousine in his yard. In fact, they were simply throwing the sets into the car, one on top of the other, so that some of them were sure to be smashed during the journey. "Doesn't matter", said one of the men.

June 5th, 1945. Russian troops were moving along the Reichenstein highway in an easterly direction. The villagers now had to endure a dreadful time. The headquarters of the Russian commanding officer were full of officers. The three Russian civilian commandants were billeted at private houses in the village and had no powers of authority. Three days later the Red Army moved on, after having previously removed all the furniture and fittings at the headquarters of the commanding officer.

The village was simply swarming with Russians. There were more than two thousand of them. The houses were overcrowded, and tents were pitched in the village. Field-kitchens were set up all over the place, and there was a constant coming and going on the part of the Russian sol-

diers. The next few days and nights were dreadful. All the villagers, and in particular the womenfolk, were at the mercy of the Russians, both during the day and at night. Even during the day the Russians organized a regular hunt in order to terrorize the womenfolk. The village was entirely surrounded by Russian soldiers and large numbers of them were sitting about idle, up on the hills near the village. Whenever any of the girls or women tried to flee from the village in order to get away from the Russians, the soldiers on the heights would spot them and give chase on horseback.

When I asked some of the Russians how long these conditions were to persist, they told me, "As long as we like. Maybe two or three days, maybe three weeks." I was at my wits' end. I decided to seek advice elsewhere, and accordingly set off for Maifritzdorf. On my way back to Heinrichswalde I was overtaken by a heavy thunderstorm. I went to Seppelt's farm, which lies all alone up on the mountain-ridge, in order to shelter from the storm. When I entered the house I found all the womenfolk in tears and the children scared to death. The women told me that a woman from the next house had just been raped by a Russian soldier. By the time I reached Heinrichswalde I was soaked to the skin, but I was somewhat relieved to find that most of the Russians had left the village.

Report No. 105

Heinrichswalde, near Frankenstein¹⁴⁷

June 23rd, 1945. Three of the women from the village were raking hay in the fields, when two Russians suddenly appeared. One of them pushed the two older women away whilst the other seized hold of the young girl and dragged her away. She struggled to get free, and a fierce fight began between her and the Russian. Suddenly, they both toppled backwards and started rolling down the slope. Finally, the Russian managed to pin her down. She was completely exhausted, but still put up a valiant resistance, whereupon the Russian started hitting her in the face with a thick leather thong. The girl would no doubt have been done for, had not the two women in the meantime managed to get away from the other Russian and fetched the girl's father. He rushed to the spot in a farm-wagon. When he got there he jumped down from the cart and, completely infuriated, brandished his whip, whereupon the Russians took to their heels as fast as they could.

During the night of April 4th, four Polish marauders raided Wenzel's inn. The daughter of the owner gave the following account of what happened. "From May 8th, 1945, onwards life was unbearable, and things got worse and worse from month to month. In August the Poles arrived. The P. P. R. party and the P. P. S. party immediately seized our inn and

¹⁴⁷ s. *Beitraege*, Vol II, p. 530 ff

made it their headquarters. Brawls and free fights often occurred during their meetings and assemblies. The inn was a kind of transit-camp for the Poles, as we had no Poles who were permanently billeted, but only a Polish manager.

On the night in question they first of all beat my father and knocked him down. Then they made me show them all the rooms. All four of them were armed with revolvers. We went through the attics, cellars, and all the other rooms, and they inspected and examined all the contents, and removed whatever took their fancy. Then we reached the room in which my father was lying, sobbing with pain. The Poles promptly started belabouring him again and kicked him in the stomach with their heavy boots. They removed all our possessions from the cupboards and drawers and dragged everything out into the yard, where some other Poles then drove off with all the things.

One of the Poles then seized hold of me and dragged me into the guest-room. When I refused to do as he wanted, he hit me in the face in a most brutal manner. (The girl's face was completely disfigured for a couple of weeks.) Thereupon he threatened to send the other three fellows after me. So I jumped out of the window into the garden below, a drop of about eight feet. But another Pole immediately grabbed hold of me again, as they had surrounded the house on all sides. However, I told him to leave me alone as I was ill, and he let me go. Trembling all over, I ran to my cousin's. My parents had no idea what had happened to me, and it was not until next morning that I ventured to return home. Similar incidents occurred every night."

Palm Sunday, April 7, 1946. From the news which had reached us and the events of the past weeks it was obvious that we should soon have to bid farewell to our native country. In order to prepare the parishioners I told them of my forebodings and advised them to make the necessary preparations. In case we should be separated on the journey I gave them the address of my sister in Godesberg on the Rhine, so as to enable us to establish contact with one another more easily.

Tuesday, April 9, 1946. Early in the morning orders were issued that the Germans must leave Heinrichswalde. I was informed that I should have to remain, but despite this we gathered some of our belongings together in readiness.

The villagers (about 1,350 persons) assembled in front of the inn belonging to the mayor, Mr. Schubert. On the opposite side of the road was the building in which the Polish mayor had taken up his quarters. It was not until about noon that the trek eventually set off. In the meantime I had followed Mischkowski's advice and had distributed all the cash available among the parishioners and refugees who had no money of their own left. The money had been placed in jars and buried for safety, but I managed to dig up the jars just before we left.

Our trek proceeded via Hemmersdorf, Pilz, and Baumgarten, to Frankenstein. Most of the people were on foot and were either pushing or

pulling handcarts and wheelbarrows of every type imaginable. Mrs. Lasrig was pushing her fifteen-year old daughter, who was paralysed, in a perambulator. Some of the luggage and a number of old persons were driven to Frankenstein on carts belonging to the new Polish owners. My aged mother travelled on the cart belonging to Mr. Schubert, the mayor, and as my help was badly needed by many of those on foot I gave the sacred bread and wine, which I had taken with me, to my mother for her to look after them safely.

It was dark by the time we reached our destination. There was a considerable commotion at the "Elephant Inn" in Frankenstein. It had been previously used as a prison and a chamber of torture for Germans. Mrs. Spanig of Heinrichswalde was imprisoned here. Mrs. E. D. of Frankenstein, for instance, was arrested, taken to the inn, and beaten with rubber cudgels. The Poles then put a thick tea-cosy over her head and jammed it in a door. They pushed wooden sticks and needles under her fingernails. After being subjected to this treatment she had to be taken to hospital. The Poles later arrested her a second time and ill-treated her once more, on the grounds that she had been in charge of an evening-class for young people for nine months. She was subjected to this brutal treatment despite the fact that she had never been a member of the National Socialist Party.

When we arrived at the inn the Poles immediately checked our luggage and searched us, but in spite of the fact that there were numerous male and female officials present it was not possible to check and search everybody. Those who had the misfortune to be searched were treated in a most disgusting manner and were forced to strip, and even their genitals were examined.

On Thursday, April 11th, 1946, at about eight o'clock in the evening, the train, consisting of about forty coaches, which was to take us out of our native country, left Frankenstein. We told everyone to lock and barricade the doors of the coaches on the inside. Unfortunately, however, many of the coaches were occupied solely by women and children, and at various stations at which we stopped, the doors of the coaches were forced open and the occupants robbed.

We finally arrived in Alversdorf, near Helmstedt, on Monday evening, April 15th, 1946. From Alversdorf some of the expellees were taken to Brunswick, others to the Harz Mountains, whilst the remainder, about 250 persons, were taken to Aurich and from there to Borkum, where they were given accommodation at the refugees' camp in the barracks there.

*Report No. 106***The Parish of Kamenz, near Frankenstein¹⁴⁸**

The parish of Kamenz included 2,458 Catholics (1942) and 536 persons of other denominations (1929). A church (Assumption of the Virgin Mary) is mentioned in historical records in 1216. An Augustinian monastery was founded in Kamenz in 1210. From 1247 onwards until 1810, when it was secularized, it was a Cistercian abbey. The present church was built about 1350 in the Gothic style. In 1700 certain parts were rebuilt in the baroque style, and during the years 1701 to 1712 certain baroque additions were made in the interior.

The castle belonging to the Hohenzollerns¹⁴⁹ was looted and ransacked by the Russians after they captured Kamenz. Hundreds of lorries were used to remove the furniture and fittings. By the time the Poles arrived in July, 1945, the castle was a sorry sight. Polish civilians as well as officials likewise looted all the rooms and carried off all the valuable pottery, paintings, and furniture, before they wilfully set fire to the castle.

The beautiful old Cistercian church in Kamenz, which had been the parish-church since 1810, was ransacked by Russian troops who arrived in Kamenz after the capitulation. They smashed the doors and the receptacles and trampled on a painting by Michael Willmann.¹⁵⁰ Members of the Red Army broke into the church practically every day and continued to ransack it.¹⁵¹

Countless valuable works of art belonging to various churches in Silesia and in particular to churches in Breslau, as well as works of art belonging to various state collections had been stored in the church at Kamenz during the war as a safety measure. When the church was ransacked and looted most of these works of art, including a large number belonging to churches and art galleries in Breslau, were removed — about forty to fifty lorries and twenty furniture-vans were used for this purpose — and taken eastwards, presumably to Warsaw.

... January 22nd, 1946. The castle in Kamenz was on fire. Having ransacked the castle and wrought complete havoc there, the Poles set fire to it. By day the fire-brigade was called out, and at night new fires were kindled. This went on for several days. An eyewitness, Mrs. K.'s nephew, who lived in D., gave the following account. "They even broke open the tombs in the mausoleum and threw out the bodies of the dead into the open. The body of Prince Heinrich lay on the steps of the mausoleum. Somebody had smashed his teeth and removed the gold crowns and had

¹⁴⁸ s. *Beutiaege*, Vol II, p. 543, p. 549 ff.

¹⁴⁹ After the secularization of the Cistercian monastery in Kamenz in 1810 the domains of the monastery became the property of the daughter of King Frederick William III of Prussia, Friederike Luise Wilhelmine, by deed of purchase of February 25, 1812.

¹⁵⁰ Silesian painter of baroque period.

¹⁵¹ From May, 1945, onwards about 2,000 soldiers of the Russian Occupation troops were billeted in the rooms of the former monastery in Kamenz.

stuck a stick in his mouth. Another of the royal corpses had been propped up against the wall of a house with his arm raised in the Hitler salute . . ."

As I worked in the offices of the Polish administrative authorities for about ten months, prior to being expelled from Kamenz, I should like to give an account, based on my own personal experiences, of the conditions under which the Germans were forced to live there.

Prior to the conclusion of the Potsdam Agreement the Poles, by armed force, assumed the administration of territory which so far with but a few exceptions had been inhabited solely by Germans. Before the war there had not been a single Pole domiciled in Kamenz, my native village, but on July 16th, 1945, Polish militia appeared and made the Germans hand over the council offices and the keys to all the safes. The Germans were deprived of all their rights and were completely at the mercy of the Poles. On one occasion, for instance, my parents and I were held up by two Polish secret police officials about half a mile away from the village. Threatening us with their revolvers, they searched us for watches and jewelry. Assault and robbery were the order of the day, not only outside the village, but also in the main streets of the village. One woman, for instance, was robbed of the salt and matches she had just bought for a considerable price, by Polish militiamen as she came out of the shop. The Germans were no longer allowed to have any possessions whatsoever. The Polish mayor himself actually went into the houses belonging to Germans every day and removed anything of value which had not been stolen by Russians, who had looted and ransacked all the houses in the village immediately after the Occupation. Furniture, clothing, food, things of value, and things which were worthless were "requisitioned" and removed to the storerooms at the council offices, where the Poles then selected the best objects for their own use and smashed the rest. Many of the objects stolen in this way were later sold on the black market or else handed over to members of the Red Army in exchange for alcohol. Every time a Polish wedding took place a number of German families were turned out of their homes beforehand and were not allowed to take any of their belongings with them. This was the simplest way of "setting up" the young couple! And even the officials of the Polish secret police resorted to measures such as these. I had plenty of opportunity to observe cases of this kind.

The blood-stained floors and walls of the cellars at the headquarters of the Polish militia and secret police, which were used as prison-cells, are evidence of the same inhuman terrorist measures cited during the trials of guards of former concentration camps under the Nazi regime. On one occasion four Polish secret police officials, armed with revolvers and horsewhips, arrested me at the council offices. Thereupon they interrogated me as to where the "gold of Tschenstochau" had been buried and threatened to flog me if I did not tell them. When they failed to get any information from me they arrested my father and eventually forced

him to tell them where we had buried the family silver. After they had made him dig it up under their supervision, they took off with their booty and we were once more released.

Many persons are still suffering from the effects of the brutal treatment they were subjected to. The unfortunate victims were stripped and tied to a board with their legs apart. They were then flogged with heavy horsewhips until they fainted. Their piercing screams resounded through the streets of the village, despite the fact that a wireless set was turned on as loud as possible to drown their cries. These inhuman brutes did not even hesitate to beat their victims to death.

The sexton of the Protestant parish said that he knew of about thirty graves in which unfortunate victims such as these, including many German soldiers who had been prisoners-of-war and had been released, had been buried.

One day, whilst we were staying at our last quarters — the Russians had already turned us out of our previous quarters three times —, the Polish mayor appeared there, together with a whole crowd of Poles, and stole a number of valuable objects, including a harmonium and a violin, etc., which were part of a collection of antiques. Incidentally, I have not mentioned the large number of poultry and cattle which the Poles stole from the German farmers. As soon as the Polish administration was set up, most of the farms were taken over by the new Polish owners without the Germans receiving any compensation whatsoever, despite the fact that the Polish administrative head of the district assured the German mayors — I myself was present at this meeting — that there would be no change of ownership. This promise, however, was made in the early days of the Polish administration, when the new rulers of the country felt that their position was not as yet firmly established. Later on all confiscation of German property was actually legally sanctioned by the Polish authorities.

Practically every day Germans who had been terrorized by Poles would come to the council offices and report the confiscation of all their property and possessions. They were promised protection and assured that their case would be investigated, but no sooner had they gone out of the office than the Poles would make fun of them and then not trouble their heads about the case any more.

Under the circumstances it was hardly surprising that the state of health of the Germans rapidly began to deteriorate. Undernourished as they were and forced to live crowded together, it was inevitable that typhus and various other diseases should break out. Practically all the patients at St. Joseph's hospital were typhus cases. Despite the self-sacrificing care of the Sisters of Mercy, many of the patients died, since there were not enough medical supplies available. What supplies there were, were too dear for the Germans to buy, for the rate of exchange of the zloty, which was really no longer of any value at all, was two Reichsmarks. State aid was given in the case of Poles who fell ill, but the Germans who had been robbed of the last of their possessions had no means of raising money to pay the exorbitant prices demanded for

medical supplies. Food supplies were allocated to the hospital, but only for those of the patients who were Poles and not for the Germans. The German doctors and nurses did everything within their power in caring for the sick, irrespective of the nationality of the patients, but they were powerless to deal with the shortage of food and medical supplies. Fresh cases of typhus from the surrounding districts were admitted to hospital every day. Instead of seeking to improve the living conditions of the rest of the population and thus prevent the epidemic from spreading, the Russians and Poles vied with each other in forcing the people to live more crowded together from day to day. Sanitary conditions were indescribable. The water-supply was filthy, and the drains at the reservoir were constantly being opened so that all the dirt filtered into the drinking-water.

How did the Germans manage to exist under these conditions, which were worse than those in any concentration camp ever heard of? As was already mentioned, shops and farms belonging to the Germans were seized by the Poles. The only means of existence left to the Germans was for them to sell things which actually they urgently needed themselves, and with the money obtained in this way, buy food on the black market.

The following prices will serve as a comparison. Two pounds of butter cost 300 zloty, the equivalent of 600 Reichsmarks, and six pounds of bread cost 60 zloty, the equivalent of 120 Reichsmarks. Salaries were as follows: as a civil servant employed at the council offices for five villages I received a salary of 200 zloty, whereas Polish employees at the same office received 1,000 zloty and more. In addition, the latter also derived proceeds from the stolen goods they sold and this "income" was often considerably more than their regular monthly salary.

Commerce and trade were controlled exclusively by the Poles. No German was allowed to pursue his profession, not even if he had previously had a business of his own. Trade was at a complete standstill. The goods offered for sale in the shops were either things which had been stolen from the Germans — all stock-in-hand had to be handed over to the Poles along with the entire business, without the Germans receiving any compensation whatsoever — or else UNRRA goods.

Report No. 107

The Parish of Maifritzdorf, near Frankenstein¹⁵²

The parish of Maifritzdorf included 1,873 Catholics (1942) and 59 persons of other denominations (1929). A church (St Mary Magdalene's) is mentioned in historical records in 1335. The present church was built in 1722 in the baroque style. Until 1810 Maifritzdorf belonged to the Cistercian Abbey in Kamenz, as did the chapels of ease at Doerndorf (St Nicholas' Church, mentioned in historical records in 1317) and Follmersdorf (St Jacob's Church, which already existed in the Middle Ages). The present church was built in 1726.

... On May 8th, 1945, Russian troops, advancing in the direction of Glatz, rode through the village at full speed. Towards evening the first

¹⁵² s. *Beutraege*, Vol II, p. 559 ff

lot of Russian infantry arrived in Maifritzdorf. The Russian and Ukrainian civilians welcomed all the Russian soldiers who came to the vicarage and took them into the house. They all behaved in an orderly manner, however, and, on the whole, things were fairly quiet in the village. Of course, those farms from which the German owners had fled were soon occupied by Russian civilians and soldiers. During the night Russian officers patrolled the village and entered all the houses. This naturally caused some alarm among the villagers, and in a few cases incidents occurred which were due to misunderstandings. On the whole, however, the Russians behaved in an orderly manner. They tried to persuade Mrs. Lachnitt's daughter to come out of the house and show them the way, but eventually took themselves off again when she refused to do so. For several days the Russian troops continued to pass through the village, along Doerndorf Road and the main highway leading to Reichenstein and Glatz. The Russian and Ukrainian civilians were the first to cause serious trouble in Maifritzdorf. Aided by Russian soldiers who were passing through the village, they began ransacking and looting the houses. They now wreaked their vengeance on the Germans for every reprimand and injustice they had ever been subjected to in the village in the days when they had worked on the farms there, prior to Germany's collapse. Unfortunately, however, they now made no distinction between those who had been kind to them and those who had treated them badly. They even ransacked the homes of persons who had given my sister gifts for the Russian and Ukrainian civilian workers when she organized a collection on behalf of the latter during the war. These fellows now brought all their booty along to the vicarage, and they were busy in the kitchen there all day, cooking and frying. The quantities of bacon, eggs, and sausages which they removed from the cellars and storerooms of the houses in Maifritzdorf were truly amazing. They ate like gluttons and got drunk every night, together with the soldiers. It was not long before they managed to obtain firearms, with which they then threatened the villagers who refused to give them clothes and food. At the vicarage, however, they remained fairly docile even when they were thoroughly drunk. And whenever I appeared in the village they would hurriedly disperse.

The Russians had occupied Doerndorf prior to coming to Maifritzdorf. Mrs. R., a widow living in Doerndorf, was promptly turned out of her house, which was then used by the Russians as a field-hospital. A large quantity of sacred linen belonging to the church at Doerndorf and also a black cope, which had been stored at Mrs. R.'s house, as she had been the caretaker of the church, were missing after the Russians had used her house as a hospital. Russian women-partisans, who apparently were utterly shameless, and soldiers slept together in beds they had stolen and set up in the Doerndorf churchyard. A Russian soldier who died of his wounds was also buried in the churchyard in Doerndorf. A number of German women in Doerndorf were treated in an abominable manner in the early days of the Russian Occupation. In fact, during the subsequent weeks the inhabitants of Doerndorf were subjected to worse

treatment than were the villagers of the other two parishes. The reason for this was that there was no German priest in Doerndorf. In those villages belonging to the deanery of Kamenz where there was a clergyman, his presence ensured a certain amount of protection for the inhabitants. Countless Russian troops marched through Follmersdorf during the early days of the Russian Occupation, but the villagers were subjected to less hardship than those of Maifritzdorf and Doerndorf. The presence of Chaplain G. and Precentor T. was a great help and consolation to them. Three months prior to Germany's collapse T. had secretly taken in two Jewish girls from Breslau and given them accommodation in the school-building. It is true that the girls were often a burden to Family T. during the months that followed, for they were by no means docile, but at least they to some extent repaid T.'s kindness by telling the Russian commissaries and officers that T. had been very good to them and that he had not been a supporter of National Socialist ideas. Soon afterwards Chaplain G. received a document bearing the hammer and sickle seal from the Russians which, in the weeks that followed, proved of great assistance and enabled him to assert his authority, in a manner which was often most amusing, in all kinds of complicated situations.

The churches in Maifritzdorf, Follmersdorf, and Doerndorf were never ransacked and looted by the Russians. In Kamenz on the other hand, however, the Russians turned the priest out of his house soon after they seized the village, and they also broke open the tabernacle in the church...

Owing to the fact that Maifritzdorf is situated on the main highway connecting Glatz and Neisse and Upper Silesia, the village suffered considerably as a result of all the Russian troops that passed through. The bridges and tunnels in the neighbourhood had foolishly been blown up by German troops prior to the arrival of the Russians. As there are no bridges along this highway as far as Reichenstein, however, and the bridges beyond Patschkau and Ottmachau which had been damaged were soon repaired, there was an enormous amount of traffic along this route. The houses in Maifritzdorf which were situated on the main road were ransacked and looted again and again. Soldiers, Russians, Ukrainians, and Poles, the latter often accompanied by Polish soldiers in Russian uniforms, raided the farms and stole the carts, the horses and oxen.

At night more incidents than ever occurred. Small detachments of soldiers, stragglers, female partisans, and former Ukrainian and Russian civilian workers now made up for any consideration which had been shown by the first detachments of Russian soldiers to arrive in the village, and there were disturbances every night. On several occasions villagers came to my house in the middle of the night and begged me to help them, and I frequently took in women and children and gave them a shelter for the night in order to protect them from the marauders. In the course of these raids cases of rape occurred again and again. I should say that about forty to fifty women were raped in Maifritzdorf, although many women, of course, kept silent about what had happened to them.

The inhabitants of my village were obliged to endure much suffering and hardship. Hordes of soldiers and Russian and Ukrainian recruits swarmed into the houses and stables. They stole all the horses in the village with the exception of about ten. They robbed the villagers of their poultry and removed all the farm-carts and agricultural machines by simply attaching them to their army lorries and driving off with them. By about eleven o'clock, when these hordes had dispersed, it was estimated that the damage done and the loss of property in Maifritzdorf amounted to about 125,000 marks. Since similar incidents had occurred practically everywhere in the district round Reichenstein a general report, based on the accounts furnished by the various villages, was sent to the headquarters of the Russian commanding officers, but there the matter ended.

In the meantime the Russians set about bringing in the harvest. The owners of large estates had been expropriated as soon as the Russians had occupied the district. Russian harvest commandos which also included a large number of Germans, in particular girls and women of the village who were rounded up by the Russians, now set about gathering in the harvest on the big estates. Threshing-machines, carts, and motors were carelessly overloaded and damaged one after another. By the time the Russians had finished threshing the last sheaf of corn the last of the threshing-machines was damaged beyond repair.

During the harvest, nightly disturbances and cases of looting by Russian soldiers who were not stationed in the village occurred constantly. There were various Russian harvest commandos stationed in the neighbouring villages and they apparently took turns at raiding the various villages during the night.

In the meantime the Poles were gradually beginning to settle here and there. The Poles who had been at the vicarage at the time of the capitulation had all left and, with the exception of a few seasonal labourers, there were practically no foreigners in the village. One fine day, however, some Polish officials appeared in the village, allegedly in order to take over the civilian administration. There were some Polish soldiers stationed in Reichenstein, who proved to be even worse and more cunning than the Russians, except that they did not molest the women. Gradually, more and more Polish civilians began to settle in the district.

What happened when the Poles invaded Silesia is already common knowledge. German families, together with the refugees whom they had taken in, were forced to live crowded together in tiny rooms in their own houses. Day after day the Poles prowled about the house, the farm, the garden or the fields without doing a stroke of work, constantly on the look-out for booty! Drunken orgies and acts of violence were the order of the day. The Poles even went so far as to deprive the Germans whose houses and farms they had seized of all the keys. They sold the cattle and the stock. They slaughtered the oxen. They killed the brood-sows and the poultry for the numerous weddings and family festivals they were constantly celebrating. They confiscated the grain. And worst of all,

they were constantly distilling spirits, for which purpose they used everything available that could be turned into alcohol. In a most brutal manner they refused to help the Germans who were starving. These conditions prevailed in practically all the districts in which the Poles had settled. I should like to mention a few incidents which illustrate the brutal behaviour of the Poles.

On one occasion Polish militiamen who were stationed in Maifritzdorf arrested a man from Hemmersdorf, who was on his way to the office of the Polish mayor in Maifritzdorf in order to fetch a permit. Despite the fact that the man's identity papers were in order, the Polish militiamen flogged him and locked him up in a cell. The man was suffering from diabetes, and, as a result of the ill-treatment he had received, he had one of his spasms. The Poles refused to fetch a doctor, and the man died.

Before our misfortunes reached a climax, despondent treks of Germans from various villages who had been driven out of their homes, in the course of the first so-called evacuation, by militiamen eager to assert their authority and Polish mayors who were Communists, passed through our village. Soon after the Poles took over the administration one of these treks gave rise to a dreadful atrocity in Maifritzdorf.

One Sunday evening as I was going for my usual walk round the parish with Dr. K., one of the villagers, a trek, consisting of old men, women, and children, shabbily attired and carrying bundles containing their belongings, came trudging along the road from Reichenstein and turned into Church Lane. Youths belonging to the Polish militia were driving them on like cattle. As soon as I saw the trek I went and stood in front of the church, as I knew it would be sure to pass that way and I wanted to ask the poor creatures where they had come from.

There was one of the usual notorious dances, held at the orders of the Poles, in progress at Rother's inn as the trek went past. One of the persons at the dance was a young German from Glatz, the fiancé of Mr. Koenig's daughter of Maifritzdorf, who was there with his fiancée. I do not know whether the shot that was fired drew the attention of the people at the dance to the fact that a trek was just in the act of passing the inn or whether they caught sight of it through the windows, but at any rate the young man in question suddenly jumped up and called out in a loud voice that it was a dirty trick to dance whilst the poor innocent creatures outside were being driven to their miserable fate. The young man had been a soldier during the war and had been wounded six times. Seeing that his objections were of no avail, he then called out in a loud voice that all the Germans who were present should leave. Some Polish women who could understand German thereupon told the Poles and the Russians in the room what the young man had said, and they began shouting to the Russian commander of the village, a Ukrainian, to arrest him. The German, however, hit the Ukrainian in the face and

knocked him down. Thereupon some Polish soldiers seized hold of the German, shouting "Hands up!" He raised his hands. Mr. Propfreis, the German mayor, who at that time had not yet been arrested, noticed that the man raised his hands as if for a clinch, of the type taught in the close combat courses held by the German army. A moment later the German had sent the Poles standing near him flying and was rushing down the stairs. At the bottom of the stairs he encountered a Pole, armed with a rifle, who was about to go to the assistance of his comrades. The German snatched his rifle from him and knocked him down. By this time the other Poles had caught up with him and they now hurled themselves upon him like a pack of bloodhounds. He defended himself like a madman, but eventually his strength was exhausted and he collapsed on the floor. As he lay there defenceless, one of the Poles shot him. Then they dragged him outside and pushed him headlong into a ditch. No Germans were allowed to go to his aid as he lay there, dying. One woman, however, defied the Poles' orders and went up to him and wiped the blood off his face and tried to place him in a more comfortable position. Who she was has never been ascertained. The Russian commander of the village had meanwhile recovered from the blow in the face which the young German had dealt him and now gave orders that the dance was to continue since the "Fascist" was dead. And so the dance at the inn went on whilst outside a young man bled to death.

From the beginning of 1946 onwards the villagers lived in constant anxiety as to whether they would still be in Maifritzdorf by Easter and whether their children would be able to partake of their first Holy Communion. Confirmation classes were already being held in Follmersdorf, Maifritzdorf, and Doerndorf. With the advent of spring our tormentors became more active again, and in Maifritzdorf and Follmersdorf a number of persons, chiefly labourers and their families, were turned out of their homes, and deprived of their furniture and clothing. Russians who were stationed in Kamenz once more began to raid the villages in this district since there was nothing left to steal in Kamenz, which was practically deserted. They showed a special preference for Doerndorf, and one night they ransacked the shop owned by Mr. Bleiber, the tailor, and took all they could find. In doing so, incidentally, they were actually robbing the Poles, who had taken huge quantities of material along to Mr. Bleiber for him to make garments for them. One evening two Russians raided the house of Mrs. Rost, a widow, and molested the two young women in the house, Mrs. Rost's daughter and a woman who was a refugee from Grenztal, in such a dangerous manner that the woman from Grenztal finally ran out of the house. One of the Russians then fired at her in the dark and shot her in the lung, thereby killing her. Whenever incidents such as these occurred, the Polish village-police, which had been drawn up on the same lines as the former German village-police, behaved in an extremely cowardly manner, irrespective of whether the persons who were being molested by the Russian marauders were Germans or Poles.

Despite their sadness at being forced to leave their native soil, the villagers nevertheless found consolation in the thought that they were now at last escaping from this inferno of acts of physical violence, looting, and atrocities. I was deeply moved by this event, and I began to wonder whether it would not be best if I, too, were to leave with the next lot of expellees from the village. It almost looked as though the Poles were going to let me stay on in Maifritzdorf for a while. I prayed to God to decide this question for me, as to whether I should remain or go.

After the first lot of villagers had been expelled the rest of the inhabitants of Maifritzdorf lived in constant anxiety as to when the second expulsion would occur. This took place at the end of April, 1946, when the priest and the rest of his parishioners were forced to leave their native soil. The long procession of carts moved along slowly on the dusty highway in the spring sunshine. As our forefathers had once moved into the village in slow procession seven hundred years ago, so we now left it...

Report No. 108

The Parish of Neu-Altmannsdorf, near Frankenstein ¹⁵³

The parish of Neu-Altmannsdorf included 874 Catholics (1942) and 73 persons of other denominations (1929). The church (The Assumption of the Virgin Mary) is mentioned in historical records in 1335. The present church was built in 1721 and 1722. The tower dates from the Middle Ages.

... On the morning of May 5th, 1945, I was obliged to leave Neu-Altmannsdorf a second time. I returned to Rengersdorf and was there when the war ended and the Russians occupied the village. On May 24th, as soon as the train service began to operate again, I travelled to Kamenz and arrived in Neu-Altmannsdorf next day. A few days previously crowds of Poles — in all probability former civilian workers returning from the West — had passed through the village. The people in Neu-Altmannsdorf said there had been about five thousand of them. They had spent the night in the village. They had stolen practically all the sacred linen out of the church. Attired in vestments, they had held a mock procession through the village, and had then hung the albs on trees. They had stolen a green cope and several chalice-veils, that is to say broad strips of material, as well as parts of the silk lining of the baldachins, various vestments, and all the purple altar draperies, presumably in order to make garments out of them. They had also ransacked the vicarage, but apart from curtains, bedding, bed-linen, kitchen utensils, a few books, and a wooden chest, there was nothing else missing, and it is quite probable that some of the things which were missing were already removed by the last lot of soldiers who had used the vicarage as a billet.

¹⁵³ s. *Beitraege*, Vol I, p. 257 ff.

*Report No. 109***The Parish of Peterwitz, near Frankenstein**¹⁵⁴

The parish of Peterwitz included 1,932 Catholics (1942) and 1,414 persons of other denominations (1929). The church (St Barbara's) is mentioned in historical records in 1283. The present church was built in the baroque style in 1765.

... Cases of looting, shooting, and raping women and girls occurred in every house in the village. Mr. Opahle, the headmaster of the village-school, was shot when trying to protect some girls from being raped by the Russians. Day and night Russian soldiers raided and ransacked the houses in the village.

And then the Polish "administrative authorities" arrived. The Polish mayor was the ringleader of all the raids which were carried out. The Poles robbed the Germans of all the books they possessed and even of their prayer-books, bibles, and catechisms.

On March 19th, 1946, the priest and Mr. Mueller, the locum, were suddenly arrested without warning. The Poles entered the church at seven o'clock in the morning whilst early mass was being celebrated. They hardly gave the priest time to finish mass and remove his vestment, but promptly seized the chalice and the key to the tabernacle, and, pushing the priest out of the church, locked the door behind them. Then they took him along to the vicarage and told him that he and his family and servants were to get ready immediately, as a lorry was waiting to take them away. There was hardly time for us to collect the few belongings that were left after all the number of times the house had been looted. What we did manage to gather together we hurriedly stuffed into a sack (all our suitcases had been stolen). The Poles then turned us out of the house. We climbed onto the lorry, which promptly drove off to the next parish in order to pick up the priest there in the same manner.

After practically all the clergymen in the district of Frankenstein had been picked up, we were taken to Glatz. Here we spent two days in a camp and had to sleep on the floor. On March 21st, we were put into a goods train which consisted of cattle-trucks, and taken westwards. There were forty of us, men and women, in our truck; conditions were most unhygienic, to say the least, and we were obliged to sleep on the floor which was filthy. During the whole of the journey to East Friesland we only received a little coffee and some soup on three occasions.

This report is but a very brief description of our tragic fate. The conditions under which we lived from May, 1945, onwards, and in particular after the Polish invasion, were such that we might as well have been living in an inferno.

¹⁵⁴ s. *Beitraege*, Vol. I, p. 261.

*Report No. 110***The Parish of Protzan, near Frankenstein**¹⁵⁵

The parish of Protzan included 811 Catholics (1942) and 962 persons of other denominations (1929). The church (St Peter's and St Paul's) is mentioned in historical records in 1268. The present church was rebuilt to a very considerable extent at the beginning of the seventeenth century. The portal dates from the end of the fourteenth century, the tower from about 1500. Until 1810 Protzan belonged to the Breslau cathedral-chapter.

... At about noon on May 8th, 1945, the Russians occupied Frankenstein without encountering any resistance. The inhabitants of Protzan, which is only one and a quarter miles away from Frankenstein, on being told that the latter had been occupied by the Russians refused to believe the news. Some foreign workers who had been employed on the farms in Protzan thereupon went to Frankenstein. One of them was promptly appointed commandant of the village. For the time being all remained quiet in Protzan, and it was not until a few days later that the first lot of Russian soldiers arrived in the village. In Dittmannsdorf, however, which is part of the parish of Protzan, they wrought dreadful havoc. The churchwarden, Mr. Grammel, and his wife were shot by a Russian in their kitchen because they refused to tell him where their daughter had hidden. Numerous cases of looting occurred in the district, including Protzan, too. Day and night Polish marauders and Russian soldiers raided the houses. The farmers were either forcibly deprived of their horses or else the latter were stolen during the night. Protzan now resorted to measures of self-defence, and guards were posted here and there who sounded the alarm by blowing horns every time a farm was raided. This measure proved quite effective. The Red Army now impounded practically all the cattle, and all that the farmers were allowed to retain was two or three cows. Incidentally, the farmers of Protzan had owned a lot of cattle. The parish-priest went to the Soviet authorities and begged them to be less drastic in their measures. Various promises were made him, and on the strength of these he told the village-commandant that the cattle was to remain in Protzan for the time being. This action on his part was regarded as opposition to the Red Army and he was promptly arrested. It was only thanks to the intervention of the vicar forane of Frankenstein, who was personally acquainted with the Soviet town-commandant, that the parish-priest was released...

On July 16th, 1945, some Poles who were stationed in the neighbouring town of Frankenstein appeared in Protzan and, accompanied by the German mayor, went round to the various farms and asked the farmers whether they would be prepared to take on Polish married couples as farm-workers. Some of the farmers said they were willing to do so, but others refused on the grounds that they had enough workers, which was quite true. There were a lot of refugees, especially from

¹⁵⁵ s. *Beitraege*, Vol I, p. 262 ff.

Breslau, in the village and most of them were relatives of the villagers and helped on the farms. Meanwhile some of the Poles had walked into Spittler's inn and had begun behaving in such an outrageous manner that the women there assumed that they were marauders who were about to ransack the place, as this was constantly happening, both during the day and at night. The women promptly screamed for help, whereupon the neighbours appeared in a mob as was always the case when anyone was in danger. It was a measure of self-defence which had been decided upon at a general meeting of the villagers held under Russian supervision. Without investigating matters the Poles immediately assumed that this action on the part of the neighbours was an organized resistance movement. A few hours later, towards evening, the Frankenstein Polish militia arrived in Protzan and began firing their submachine-guns at random in the streets. All the men and women — the latter were soon released again owing to the intervention of the Russians — who happened to be in the streets or returning home from work were immediately arrested by the Poles. Those who attempted to offer any resistance were soundly beaten. About twenty men were then taken to Frankenstein. When they got there the Poles led them into a yard and began beating them unmercifully and firing shots at them. Mr. Winkler, the headmaster, who had also been arrested, tried to shelter behind a lorry, whereupon the bloodthirsty brutes levelled their revolvers at him and shot him on the spot. Mr. Winkler left a widow and eight children. Two other men were wounded. One of them had lost an arm during the war. After the Poles had wounded him and left him lying helpless for several hours, one of his legs had to be amputated, too. He had to pay all the expenses for medical treatment himself.

Next day notices were affixed in the village, to the effect that the inhabitants of Protzan had put up an armed resistance against the Poles, with the result that one German, Gustav Winkler, schoolmaster, had been killed and two other men wounded. In addition, the inhabitants of Protzan were further informed on these notices that they would be expelled from the village as punishment, despite the fact that the undersigned proved that none of the villagers possessed firearms and that there had never been any indication whatsoever of an organized resistance movement against the Polish administration. The villagers were accordingly expelled on July 19th, 1945, in the midst of the harvest-season. The expellees were taken to the camp at Neisse (Upper Silesia). As the priest who had remained in the village spared no pains to inform all the authorities of the injustice to which the Germans had been subjected, the matter was passed over in silence, and the expellees were allowed to return after a certain time. The majority of them did not return to Protzan until two or three months later, only to find that all their belongings had been stolen in the meantime. The persons who had been arrested were not released until three months later, after having been beaten by the Poles practically every day. Two persons died soon after returning to the village, as a result of the ill-treatment they had been

subjected to. When the German expellees returned to Protzan they found that their houses had meanwhile been occupied by the Poles. They were now forced to plead with the Polish intruders like beggars for accommodation and shelter, which was very often not even granted them.

In September, Farmer S. was arrested for having ill-treated a Polish worker during the war. The Polish "Gestapo" — the Polish security police has the audacity to designate itself by this title — took him away on a lorry. S. attempted to escape by jumping off the lorry, as he was afraid of what they would do to him, since he had already been ill-treated on two previous occasions on account of the same matter — once, soon after the war, when the Russians had imprisoned him for a number of weeks, and the second time, when the Poles had taken him to the camp at Neisse. Whilst attempting to escape on this third occasion he was wounded by the Poles, who fired their revolvers at him. They then let him bleed to death and refused to let either a doctor or a nurse attend to him, despite the fact that a nurse offered to do so. They even refused to fetch a priest, despite the request of the dying man. They buried him in the cemetery. A few days later, on September 28th, the house belonging to the priest who had wanted to give the dying man the extreme unction was searched by the Poles and they removed everything of any value, including a wireless set, a typewriter, silver plate, and other possessions, as well as half the food supplies. The parish of Protzan thus lost four of its inhabitants, and a fifth person was crippled for life. When will the murderers receive their just punishment? They are allowed to murder innocent persons and are then extolled as heroes...

On March 22nd, 1946, all the Catholic priests in the district of Frankenstein were removed from office and sent to the British Occupied Zone of Germany. At the end of November, 1945, the inhabitants of several villages in the district of Frankenstein had been evacuated to the Russian Occupied Zone. Thereupon the Catholic priests had pointed out to the Polish administrative authorities in a politely worded petition that there were no legal reasons whatsoever for an evacuation of this kind. This petition of December 4th, 1945 had sufficed to give the Poles a good reason for depriving the Germans in the district of Frankenstein of their priests, and thus of their last moral and spiritual support...

The expellees were sent to the district of Neustadt a. Rgb., where they found accommodation in the villages of Luthe, Noepke, and Bevensen. On August 19th, 1946, the rest of the villagers were expelled from Protzan, and sent to Laasphe, near Wittgenstein in Westphalia. By June, 1947, there were only about thirty Germans left in Protzan. The death-rate in Protzan in 1945 and 1946 was twice as high as in former years.

Four persons were murdered, six or seven deaths were due to ill-treatment, one person died of typhus, and two of illnesses caused by the dreadful conditions. Every age-group was affected.

*Report No. 111***Riegersdorf, near Frankenstein ¹⁵⁶**

Riegersdorf in the parish of Briesnitz included 412 Catholics and 19 persons of other denominations (1929) The parish-church in Briesnitz (St Nicholas') is mentioned in historical records in 1399 The present church was built in 1826 Briesnitz became a parish on November 20, 1839 Prior to this date Riegersdorf was affiliated to Baumgarten

... When the first Russian soldiers entered our village on May 8th, 1945, there were still 180 foreign workers, who had been employed in building entrenchments, in Riegersdorf. They welcomed the Russians as their liberators. Two hours later a young man called Georg Mueller was shot, allegedly because he had a revolver in his possession. He is said to have been shot by a Pole. During the night large numbers of troops arrived in the village, and the women and girls were raped in a dreadful manner. Cases of looting by the foreigners who were still left in Riegersdorf and the Russians were a daily occurrence. About forty horses, a large number of carts, all motor cycles, bicycles, watches, wireless sets, and firearms were either taken from the Germans by force or had to be handed over. Groups of Russian soldiers went from house to house, ransacking and looting. Fifty per cent of the live-stock in the village had to be handed over to the Russians, and a few weeks later half of the cattle still left had also to be handed over. During the night of June 15th to 16th, 1945, twelve men of the village, including several persons who had never been members of the National Socialist Party nor were in any way guilty of any political crime whatsoever, were suddenly arrested by members of the OGPU for no reason at all. Most of the men who were arrested have up to the present time not yet returned to Riegersdorf.

On August 15th, 1945, the first lot of Poles arrived in the village, to be followed a few days later by Polish militia. They promptly occupied Rindel's inn; the owner was turned out and was only allowed to take a few of his possessions with him. Practically every evening the Polish militiamen raided and looted the houses tenanted by Germans, on the pretext of searching the premises. And a period of martyrdom began for the poor villagers. The German mayor was arrested, locked up in a cellar, and treated in a most brutal manner. Cattle treks, which also caused much damage, were now driven through the village.

During the night of November 19th to November 20th, 1945, a Pole was shot and another wounded by four Russian marauders. A rumour was promptly circulated that the two Poles had been attacked by German partisans, and that very same night twenty Germans were arrested and subjected to most brutal treatment. One of them sustained four broken ribs as the result of being kicked, whilst another suffered serious injuries to his kidneys. For twelve whole weeks they were obliged to submit to this kind of treatment, until they were finally released from the prison in Glatz, although it had been evident from the

outset that they were innocent. One of the farmers in Riegersdorf was arrested for having beaten a former Polish worker employed on the farm because he had treated the oxen cruelly. The German farmer was detained in a cellar for months on end and mishandled. About a year later his case was finally brought up for trial and he was sentenced to six years' imprisonment.

Two other farmers were mishandled by Poles to such an extent that they had to have medical attention. The Poles were constantly distilling spirits, and hundreds of pounds of grain were wasted in this way, despite the fact that the Germans were starving. The terrorist measures enforced by the Poles and the atrocities they committed increased from day to day, until they were almost unendurable. And to make matters worse, the Germans were deprived of all their rights. We kept hoping that these Polish brutes would depart, but on April 6th, 1946, we were informed that we were going to be expelled next day. We were only allowed to take with us as much as we could carry. Incidentally, we had already been robbed of our most valuable possessions previously. We had to assemble in the neighbouring town of Frankenstein prior to setting out on our journey, and here we were thoroughly searched by numerous Polish officials, who robbed us of the last of our belongings which were of any value. They even deprived us of our savings-bank books and of all sums of money in excess of 500 Reichsmarks. Next day they put us into a goods train, and it was with considerable misgivings and fear that we set off on our journey, for we had no idea as to where they were taking us. When we crossed the Polish frontier four days later, we heaved a sigh of relief at the thought that we had at last escaped from Polish terrorism and cruelty. Despite all this, however, we still yearn with all our heart for our native country and our native village, from which the Poles expelled us in so ruthless a manner. May God grant that some day we shall be able to return, for that is what we most ardently desire.

Report No. 112

The Parish of Schraebsdorf, near Frankenstein¹⁵⁷

Schraebsdorf (Chapel of the Sacred Heart of Jesu at the castle) belongs to the parish of Kaubitz. It included 202 Catholics (1942) and 44 persons of other denominations (1929). Kaubitz included 839 Catholics (1942) and 435 persons of other denominations (1929). The first wooden church in Kaubitz was built in 1447 by Bishop Peter Nowag. The present parish-church and place of pilgrimage was built during the years 1496 and 1497 by Canon Christoph von Reibnitz of Breslau and his brother, Dipprand, Lord of Kaubitz. In 1736 the interior was completely rebuilt in the baroque style, the towers being added in 1780. Until 1897 Kaubitz belonged to the parish of Protzan. It became an independent parish on December 12, 1897. The chief day of pilgrimage was the Friday before Palm Sunday.

At about five o'clock in the afternoon, on May 8th, 1945, the first lot of Russians passed through the village. On May 9th, we held our

¹⁵⁷ s. *Betraege*, Vol. II, p. 591 ff.

third supplication procession as usual. In the course of the morning Poles and Russians began raiding and looting the houses in the village, to the horror of the inhabitants. Later on in the day we learnt that the National Socialist local group leader had been shot by a Russian soldier. Various orders and instructions were now issued to the German population. All wireless sets, cameras, typewriters, bicycles, telephones, and motor-cars had to be handed over to the Russians immediately. Farmers were only allowed to keep two cows. All the rest of the cattle was taken to the estate which was now run by Ukrainians. From nine o'clock in the evening until five o'clock in the morning no villagers were allowed to be out in the streets. The Russians promptly set up a German administrative authority. The Catholic priests now began to wear their soutanes all day so as to be more easily recognized by the Russians.

The cattle which had been impounded by the Russians was driven off in an easterly direction in long treks. On numerous occasions villagers were obliged to work for the Russians. On June 18th, 1945, for instance, a large number of young men and women of the village were rounded up by the Russians to help drive the cattle. Some of them were taken as far as Oppeln and only managed to escape being abducted by fleeing. The same day a large number of Russian soldiers were billeted on the village. In order to protect the girls of the village from being raped we helped them to hide in the church. They remained in hiding there for three days, but then the Russians learnt of this hiding-place, and on the Sunday morning, June 21st, the girls were obliged to flee through the corn-fields to the various outlying hamlets which belonged to the parish. Two weeks later, likewise on a Sunday, an OGPU patrol interrogated all the men of the village, the reason given being that the Russians wished to ascertain who had been a member of the S.S. Paul Huebner and Alois Rautenstrauch, two of the farmers in the village, were arrested because they had no identity-card. Neither of them had ever been a member of the S.S. In the autumn of 1945 they both eventually managed to escape from a prison-camp in Oppeln.

From the day the Russians occupied the village robbing and stealing became the order of the day, and in the course of the following weeks the outlying hamlets of the parish, in particular, suffered considerably.

In July, 1945, that is to say prior to the Potsdam Conference, Polish administration was introduced in all the villages and a Polish mayor installed. Soon afterwards Polish families were installed on the various German farms as the owners. In the neighbouring village of Protzan the inhabitants allegedly refused to take in Poles. As a result practically all the villagers there were arrested by the Polish militia and taken to a Polish camp at Neisse.

In October, 1945, all the churches and vicarages in the town of Frankenstein and the neighbouring district were searched by Polish militia for valuables which might possibly have been stored there, "refugees' property and the like". They searched the church and the vicarage in Kaubitz for three hours. They actually climbed into the organ and rummaged about in the rubble in the vaults under the church...

At the end of November, 1945, the German inhabitants of the villages of Kamenz, Gallenau, and Altmannsdorf were suddenly expelled and taken away in a Russian goods train. As it was to be feared that the Poles would resort to the same illegal expulsion measures in other villages, too, the Catholic priests of the deanery of Frankenstein, at the beginning of December, sent a petition to the highest Polish administrative authorities in which they complained of the injustice that had been done and requested the Poles to desist from expulsions of this kind. — On December 24th, orders were issued that the Germans must hand over all books and all sports tackle in their possession to the Poles. Needless to say, this order was only partly complied with...

Practically every night Russian and Polish marauders looted and stole to their heart's content. Burglaries frequently occurred during the night in our village, too. In February, 1946, a group of marauders raided the vicarage. They fired shots at the front door, broke a window, and, having forced an entry, proceeded to smash all the doors in the house. They ransacked the house for one and a half hours. Whilst this was going on, the inhabitants of the house were detained in one of the rooms and threatened by the marauders with loaded revolvers. When they finally left, these Russian and Polish marauders — incidentally, the Russian sentry in the village was one of them — took a whole cartful of booty with them.

In February the alarming news reached us from Glatz that the Germans were being expelled. At the deanery convention in Frankenstein on March 20th, 1946, it was announced that all the Catholic priests of the district were to be expelled next day, together with their relatives, as punishment for having lodged a complaint with the Polish administrative authorities regarding the expulsion of the Germans from Kamenz and Gallenau.

On March 21st, news came through from Frankenstein that some of the priests of the district had already been expelled by the Poles. We began to hope that our parish had been spared. Divine service was held in our beloved church, but it was the last time, for next day, at two o'clock in the afternoon, a lorry drove up in front of the vicarage, and the priest and the members of his family were turned out of the house and taken away on the lorry. From Kaubitz they proceeded via Seitendorf, Baitzen, Frankenstein, Tarnau, and Baumgarten, to Glatz. Here they were put into a goods train, the last truck of which was occupied by clergymen and their families, and taken to the British Occupied Zone of Germany.

Three weeks later the first lot of parishioners was expelled and likewise sent into the British Occupied Zone... The rest of the parishioners were expelled at intervals, later on, until there was practically no one left. Most of the expelled found accommodation in Berge, near Bersenbrueck, in the suburbs of Oldenburg, and in Brake/Lemgo, whilst a few families settled near Helmstedt and in South Germany.

Report No. 113

The Parish of Seitendorf, near Frankenstein¹⁵⁸

The parish of Seitendorf included 1,004 Catholics (1942) and 851 persons of other denominations (1929). The church (St Michael's) is mentioned in historical records in 1400. The present church was built in 1747, and the tower in 1601.

The Expulsion of a Priest

In March, 1946, Holy Communion was to be held for the first time for those who had been confirmed in Stolz, which belonged to the parish of Seitendorf. Two days earlier I was just in the act of holding confession for the children and grown-ups when some Polish militiamen, armed with rifles, a Polish priest, and a civilian, who was supposed to be a Communist sheriff, suddenly entered the church. They pulled me out of the confessional, dragged me outside, and made me get into a car. Then they took me to a camp. It was almost eleven o'clock at night when we reached the camp, and I had not had anything to eat since noon. Next day I was put into a cattle-truck along with a lot of other expellees, and the train set off in a westerly direction. In fact, they sent us from the Czechoslovakian to the Dutch frontier.

Report No. 114

The Parish of Silberberg, near Frankenstein¹⁵⁹

The parish of Silberberg included 795 Catholics (1942) and 442 persons of other denominations (1929). The church (St. Peter's and St. Paul's) was built as a wooden church in 1709 by the Cistercian Abbey in Heinrichau. The present church was built during the years 1729 to 1731. In 1807 it was shelled and damaged by fire, but was restored during the years 1808 to 1818. Silberberg became a parish on July 5, 1850.

The Russians entered the village on May 9th, 1945, at about eight o'clock in the morning. Unfortunately, their progress was impeded by the barricades which had been erected, and also by the ammunition trucks which had been left behind by the S.S. and which now exploded. The Russian troops thus came to a halt in the village and began raiding and looting the houses. A large number of the inhabitants fled into the forest for safety, but I remained in the village. Hardly any attempts at all were made to raid the church and the vicarage. On numerous occasions, however, the villagers appealed to me to help them get rid of marauders who wanted to ransack the house, and I managed to persuade the latter to clear off. Incidentally, on two of these occasions a Russian threatened to shoot me, and it was only the intervention of a second Russian that

¹⁵⁸ s. *Beitraege*, Vol I, p. 271.

¹⁵⁹ s. *Beitraege*, Vol I, p. 272 ff.

saved me. It was during these early days of the Russian Occupation that one of the women of our village, Mrs. Leopoldine Bartsch, who was over seventy, died, a martyr in the cause of charity. She had gone along to the house of the village-doctor in order to render his aged mother, who was alone, assistance. When she got there, she was raped by the Russians and shot. In the evening about thirty-five persons, most of them women and children, sought refuge at the vicarage because they were afraid to remain in their own homes. They stayed at the vicarage for several days, and during this time were not molested by the Russians. A Communist worker was appointed village-mayor by the Russians, and it must be admitted that he tried to be fair to everyone and do his best for the villagers. In addition, Russian military guards under the command of an officer were also stationed in the village. The Russians continued to molest the villagers and to raid the houses at night.

In July, 1945, the first lot of Poles arrived in the village, and very soon a Polish administration, militia, and secret police were installed. The number of Poles who began to settle in the village increased from week to week. The German inhabitants were forced to live crowded together in small rooms, whilst the rest of the rooms were occupied by Poles. The Germans were obliged to leave all their possessions, including clothing, in the rooms they had to vacate, and these were then removed by the Poles. In addition, the Polish secret police raided houses practically every night and mishandled the inhabitants and threatened to shoot them... On one occasion they also raided the vicarage, with the sole purpose of removing a wireless set. On another occasion they searched the church and the vicarage for hours on end, allegedly in order to find the ammunition which was supposed to have been concealed there. Of course, as I had told them when they commenced their search, they found nothing. In any case, the real purpose of their search was to steal whatever took their fancy. The same kind of incidents occurred in the other villages belonging to the deanery, too. This finally prompted the parish-priest to send a report to the Polish apostolic administrator.¹⁶⁰ In his reply the latter stated that it was indeed regrettable that such incidents should have occurred, but that the German clergy should bear in mind that for the past six years the Poles had not had an opportunity to attend divine service, to take holy communion, or to participate in any religious instruction, and that for this reason they were demoralized. Incidentally, only a few Poles attended divine service in the parish...

Meanwhile the entire parish has been split up and the parishioners are scattered throughout the various zones of Germany.

¹⁶⁰ Dr Karol Milik, the Polish apostolic administrator in Breslau since September 1, 1945.

Report No. 115

The Parish of Weigelsdorf, near Muensterberg, district of Frankenstein¹⁶¹

The parish of Weigelsdorf included 1,680 Catholics (1942) and 353 persons of other denominations (1929). A church (St Bartholomew's) is mentioned in historical records in 1376. The present church was built in 1812 in the baroque style. Until 1810 it belonged to the Cistercian Abbey in Tiebnitz.

When the Russians advanced beyond Grottkau on February 7th, 1945, some of the parishioners were evacuated by the German army. Some of the parishioners of Eichau were evacuated to Bavaria via Czechoslovakia. They did not return to Silesia. Some of the aged and some of the women of Weigelsdorf were sent to Boehmisch-Leipa. On March 19th, 1945, the German army evacuated the rest of the parishioners as the village and surrounding district was already being shelled by the enemy. We were not, however, given any instructions as to where to go. Some of us went to Alt-Altmannsdorf, Baumgarten, Groschwitz, and Frankenstein, and some into the province of Glatz, and waited for the war to end. After Germany's collapse all the parishioners returned home again, and on Whit Sunday divine service was once more held for the first time...

Whilst the gospel was being read, a Russian patrol, armed with rifles, suddenly entered the church, to the horror and alarm of those present. Incidentally, thanks to the orders issued by the Russian commanding officer in Muensterberg and Frankenstein, the Russians never ransacked the church. They did however molest the girls of the village, some of whom defended themselves most courageously.

A new period of suffering began when the Poles appeared in the village in September, 1945. By degrees the Germans were expropriated and deprived of their farms, their agricultural machines and implements, their live-stock and their possessions. The Poles ransacked and looted German houses practically every day. German farmers who refused to hand over their property to the Poles were mishandled. Their houses were searched again and again and they themselves were threatened and beaten by the Poles and locked up in cellars, where they were then tortured. They were fettered and gas-masks were put over their faces to deaden their screams when they were being belaboured with cudgels and steel rods. It was easy enough for the Poles to find a reason to arrest them if they happened to discover that the Germans had concealed a grenade or parts of firearms somewhere.

The Poles now began to expel the Germans from their native villages. On Maundy Thursday, 1946, the first lot of Germans were expelled from Weigelsdorf. On Good Friday the inhabitants of Eichau were expelled. The expellees were obliged to sit in the ditches by the roadside, in the snow and the rain for six hours, and were not allowed to re-enter their

¹⁶¹ s. *Bettraege*, Vol II, p 595

homes. In August, on the eve of St. Bartholomew's Feast, the second lot of Germans were expelled, whilst the third group was expelled just before Christmas, 1946, when the weather was bitterly cold. Only four or five Germans remained behind and they were forced to work for the Poles...

The expellees were taken to the rural areas near Osnabrueck, to the city of Brunswick, to Seifen in the Harz Mountains, and into the Russian Occupied Zone (Merseburg-Berlin). Some of the inhabitants of Eichau are now living in Bavaria (Mistelfeld) and in East Friesland (Leer). The priest is still in touch with them, either through personal visits or by correspondence. None of the expellees have settled down in their new home and they are all of them still longing for Silesia.

Report No. 116

The Parish of Reichenbach / Eulengebirge¹⁶²

The parish of Reichenbach included 6,907 Catholics (1942) and 10,853 persons of other denominations (1929). A church (St. George's) is mentioned in historical records in 1258. It was handed over to the Order of the Knights of St. John in 1338. The present church was built at the end of the thirteenth century. From about 1338 until the second half of the sixteenth century considerable extensions were made. The north tower was built in the fifteenth century and extended in 1567. The prebend of Reichenbach was secularized in 1810. — The church in Niederstadt was built in the 1920s.

... On February 19th, 1945, our town suffered its first air-raid and many of the inhabitants decided to leave. Orders were issued by the National Socialist Welfare Movement that women, children, and the aged were to leave the town. Most of them were then taken to the Passau and Regensburg districts in Bavaria, via Czechoslovakia. The town was to be evacuated completely, but the rest of the inhabitants, namely about seventy to eighty per cent of the population, refused to leave. It was not until drastic measures were enforced, that is to say the authorities deprived those who refused to leave of their ration cards and people were forcibly evacuated, that the inhabitants finally yielded. Most of them, however, only went as far as the province of Glatz and returned home again soon after the Russians occupied the town. By June, 1945, about seventy per cent of the total population had returned to Reichenbach. When the Russians occupied the town, however, there were only 700 of the 18,000 inhabitants left in the town...

... The Russians did not occupy Reichenbach until after the capitulation on May 8th, 1945. From March, 1945, onwards, however, the town had been within the fighting zone, and the actual fighting front had only been about seven and a half miles away. We had to put up with numerous low-level attacks and the situation was sometimes very serious,

¹⁶² s. *Beitraege*, Vol I, p. 267 ff

but nevertheless the town managed to hold out. The actual entry of the Russians went off fairly quietly. Unfortunately, however, the distilleries and inns had, in a most unwarrantable manner, kept back large stocks of alcohol, and they, for the most part, were to blame for the atrocities which were committed by the Russians. Indeed, the town was like hell let loose on the first evening of the Russian occupation. I was told that women were being raped by the Russians, and people appealed to me to protect them, but I was powerless to do anything in the matter.

The Russians kept coming to the vicarage, allegedly in order to search for firearms, but actually they were looking for women. Fortunately, the electric light was out of order, and so I and the nuns, who could speak Polish and were therefore in not quite so much danger, were able to hide the women and girls who were in the house. There is one incident, however, which I shall never forget. During the night the Russians had once more appeared at the vicarage, but had failed to find any women or girls. Thereupon they went into a house on the opposite side of the road. A few moments later two women called down from the balcony of the house, "Help! Help! Save us!" But I was powerless to help and was unable to protect them from being raped. On another occasion, in the middle of the night, someone came along to the vicarage and begged me to intervene as a woman was being raped. I went to her assistance and managed to deter the Russians from carrying out their intention, but it very nearly cost me my life. On the whole, there was very little I could do...

In addition to the many cases of rape that occurred, those houses belonging to inhabitants of the town which were untenanted were ransacked and looted by foreigners and Jews who had been released from concentration camps. They not only stole the possessions of the German owners, but also damaged and smashed the fittings with hatchets, etc.

During the first weeks of the Russian occupation a Communist German municipal administration was installed, under Russian protection, but it was removed from office by the Poles a few weeks later.

In June the Poles began to arrive in Reichenbach. They did away with the German administration, and the Polish terrorist regime now began.¹⁶³

The first measures they enforced consisted in raising the rents of houses and apartments to four times the amount previously paid. This sum was then worked out in zlotys and the Poles ordered the Germans to pay this amount from May onwards. As the Germans had no zlotys they were very soon reduced to poverty. The Poles then began to turn them out of their houses and apartments, and by the beginning of 1946 practically no German family had a home of their own. Living conditions were rendered even more difficult by the order issued by the Poles, to the effect that no German must be out in the streets after eight o'clock in the evening. The Russians, too, evicted the German inhabitants from

¹⁶³ That is to say, long before the Potsdam Conference

entire districts of the town. The people were turned out of their homes at such short notice that they had to leave most of their belongings behind. Germans were deprived of their jobs, and, in order to earn a bare livelihood, then started working for the Russians, who gave them a midday-meal for a whole day's work...

In Neudorf, which belongs to the parish of Reichenbach, the Russians broke into the church, stole the vestments, and chopped the pews to bits. They completely ruined the organ, too. Then they broke open the graves in the churchyard. They exhumed the body of Count Perpomker, who had been a patron of the church and had died some years previously, and tossed his skull about in the churchyard. The protests made to the commanding officer went unheeded...

The Polish Jews in Reichenbach were a great source of trouble. There were about 5,000 of them, as compared to a German population of about 16,000. They soon took possession of all the shops and charged what prices they pleased. In fact, very soon Reichenbach began to be referred to as "Jewtown". The Jews undermined the last trace of any morale there had still been, and made mischief between the Russians and the Poles, with the result that the Germans were the poor victims. Despite all this suffering and hardship the parishioners remained loyally united. Divine services were well-attended, and the priest gave his flock moral and spiritual strength and solace. The daily hardships to which the Germans were subjected soon became almost unendurable, and it was with some relief that they learnt that they were to be expelled by the Poles. Expulsion measures began in April, 1946, but unfortunately not all the parishioners were expelled at the same time. They are now scattered throughout various districts of Germany, but the priest, who was also expelled, is still in contact with his parishioners through the means of circular letters.

Report No. 117

The Parish of Langenbielau, near Reichenbach / Eulengebirge¹⁶⁴

The parish of Langenbielau included 6,100 Catholics (1942) and 12,267 persons of other denominations (1929). A church (The Assumption of the Virgin Mary) is mentioned in historical records in 1335. The present church was built during the years 1868 to 1876. Langenbielau-Oberstadt belongs to the parochial union, together with Langenbielau.

At four o'clock in the afternoon, on May 8th, 1945, the Russians entered the town. The first two days were dreadful. Many of the women and girls were raped, and practically every house was looted. On the third day, however, a Russian commanding officer managed to restore law and order. The nuns were not molested by the Russians. The following incident occurred at the vicarage and is worthy of being recorded for posterity.

¹⁶⁴ s. *Beitraege*, Vol I, p. 250 — Cf also pastoral messages to the parishioners of Langenbielau Viersen, 1946 and following years

From 4 p. m. on May 8th, until 4.30 a. m. on May 9th, sixteen different parties of Russian soldiers — on two occasions there were some Polish Jews with them — came to the vicarage and asked for food and drink, which we gave them. Apart from watches, fountain-pens, and other small items, they removed nothing. At noon that same day, the curate and I had removed all the vessels needed for mass and the paten used when visiting the sick, which contained two holy wafers, from the church and taken them to the vicarage, as we were afraid the Russians might not let us enter the church. In the evening and during the night, three of the sixteen parties who came to the vicarage opened and ransacked all the cupboards and drawers in the house. They also forced open the upper left and middle doors as well as both the lower doors of the sideboard. The paten containing the holy wafers was concealed behind the upper right door of the sideboard, but this no one touched. All the vestments and sacred linen needed for Holy Mass were lying on a table in the same room. The Russians seized hold of the linen and the vestments and then threw most of them, and also the missal, onto the floor. I managed to prevent them from throwing the altar-slab onto the ground. Not one of them, however, either touched or opened the case containing the chalice. I do not think I have ever felt the presence of Jesus so strongly, in fact, almost physically, as I did that night.

Report No. 118

Peterswaldau, near Reichenbach¹⁶⁵

The parish of Peterswaldau included 1,740 Catholics (1942) and 7,746 persons of other denominations (1929). The church (St Jacob the Elder) is mentioned in historical records in 1258. The choir of the present church was built prior to 1350, the nave in 1525, and the tower in 1566.

Advancing from the Zobten (2,300 feet above sea-level), the Russians occupied Lower Silesia on May 8th, 1945. The Jewish camp near Peterswaldau which contained about two thousand internees had been disbanded the day before. The internees now raided and ransacked the houses in the village. They rigged themselves out in new clothes, which they had stolen, and moved into those apartments which were untenanted as the owners had been evacuated. Seven Jews moved into the house we were living in, as there was an apartment vacant, and my family were the only persons left in the house. The days that followed were a nightmare to those of the Germans still left in Peterswaldau. The Jews and the Russians wrought havoc and destruction. It was not even safe for the Germans to sleep in their own homes at night. They were obliged to spend the night in hiding, either in barns, out in the cornfields, or elsewhere. The first night of the Russian occupation of the village a young Russian,

¹⁶⁵ s. *Beitraege*, Vol II, p. 584 ff

who was drunk, forced his way into our house by smashing one of the windows. My wife put up a desperate fight, and, after he had dragged her across the bridge in the village out onto the main road, she managed to get free, as the Russian was so drunk that his strength began to fail him. Later on, the same Russian started throwing bricks at all the other windows in the house as he probably could no longer remember which windows belonged to our apartment. From then onwards my wife and Franz, who was ten years old at the time, used to go and sleep in our neighbour's barn. Cries of help would re-echo through the village during the night. One night, one of the women who lived quite near to us jumped out of a window on the first floor of the house, because she was terrified of what the Russians might do to her. She sustained serious injuries as the result of her fall. A large number of the wealthy (factory-owners, farmers, etc.) committed suicide. They were all Protestants. Only one Catholic committed suicide — an old man who was suffering from persecution mania.

At the beginning of June, 1945, Polish militia arrived in the village, to be followed by Polish civilians in the course of the month. During the day the inhabitants were molested by the Poles and at night by the Russians. Burglaries, thefts, robberies, and assaults were the order of the day. More and more Poles arrived in the village every day. They occupied the farms and the rest of the houses. They searched all the rooms for valuables, and went from village to village, looting and stealing.

On June 24th, 1945, Polish militia and Jews suddenly turned us out of our house without any warning whatsoever. They even forced my father, who was 87 years old, to leave, too. Together with about 800 other persons from the village, we trudged along the roads for almost a week. Many of those with us died by the roadside of hunger and exhaustion. Young mothers with tiny babies, some of whom were barely a week old, and old persons were ruthlessly turned out of their homes. Those who were bad on their feet were beaten by the Poles with rubber cudgels. As we trudged along the roads Poles drove up on lorries and stopped us and deprived us of the few belongings we had with us. During the night we were allowed to rest for a little while in ruined farms and churches. At half-past five in the morning they would make us move on, and we then had to keep on walking for the rest of the day, until ten o'clock at night, and sometimes even later. On June 29th, 1945, the Polish militia suddenly decided to leave us to our own devices, and so we promptly turned back. A neighbour of ours, a tailor, who worked for the Polish mayor, helped us to get possession of our door-key again after long and difficult negotiations with the Poles. All the rooms in the house were in a state of chaos and filthy beyond description, and a lot of things were missing. All the Germans who were still in Peterswaldau were forced to wear a white band on their sleeve to show that they were Germans. If they failed to comply with this order they were promptly arrested, taken to Polish headquarters, and either beaten with rubber cudgels or else locked up in a cell...

On November 20th, 1945, the church was ransacked and looted for the first time. An attempt had also been made to force open the tabernacle with a crow-bar. After this incident the priest used to hide the Consecrated Host in the chapel of St. Joseph's Convent after each service. The chapel was near to the church and was open to worshippers all day.

At the beginning of November, 1945, Polish militia finally turned us out of our house for good, after giving us only five minutes' warning. Our family consisted of five persons and the Poles assigned us a tiny attic in the house next-door. The owner of the house kindly gave us a table as the attic was completely bare, having been ransacked previously. Two days later, however, a drunken militiaman came and removed the table. This sort of incident occurred practically every day, until they had finally deprived us of everything we possessed — food supplies and clothing. The only persons in the village who received any ration cards were the factory workers, and the rations were very meagre. Most of the time my family lived on dry potatoes and coarse salt, normally used for cattle. It was practically impossible to obtain bread and table-salt. Our eldest boy was employed as an apprentice and received 50 zloty per month. But all he could buy with the money was a loaf of bread and two eggs. —

In the autumn of 1945, a typhus epidemic broke out which claimed many victims, both young and old alike. There were four cases of hunger typhus and spotted typhus in the house in which we were living, and two of the persons died. The number of persons who fell ill and died increased from day to day since the Germans had neither food nor adequate medical supplies. — Whilst my family was still in Peterswaldau marauders broke into the parish-church and stole practically everything of value. The castle belonging to Count Franz zu Stolberg-Wernigerode in Peterswaldau/Eulengebirge was also raided, and large quantities of valuable books and documents as well as sacred objects (the statues of saints which belonged to the chapel at the castle) were removed, taken out into the open, and either burnt or demolished. In the spring of 1946 the Catholic parish-church was ransacked a second time. Attempts to force open the tabernacle, however, failed, a fact for which the priest and his parishioners were truly grateful. In December, 1946, the two ecclesiastical institutions, St. Joseph's Hospital and St. George's Convent, were ransacked and looted very badly. It was with considerable sorrow that the Catholic parishioners saw the expulsion of the nuns and children of St. Vincent's Convent in November, 1946. — All the property and the textile factories in Reichenbach, Langenbielau, Peterswaldau, and the surrounding districts were ransacked and looted and much damage was caused...

The prison at the Polish headquarters in Peterswaldau was dreaded most of all. Every day terrible scenes were enacted there. — Much more could be said about all the dreadful incidents which occurred in Peterswaldau from the spring of 1945 until our final expulsion in the middle

of April, 1946, but perhaps it is best not to recall such grim experiences and sufferings...

Early in the spring of 1946 the Poles began expelling the Germans from the village. The first persons to be expelled were the farmers and those families who could not prove by means of some document of other that they were employed. In April, 1946, two expulsions were carried out, which left a considerable gap in the village. On both of these occasions five hundred to six hundred persons were expelled from Peterswaldau, and later on three hundred to five hundred. 1,500 persons were expelled from Peterswaldau and the surrounding districts. They were taken to the town of Reichenbach, where they were searched by the Poles, prior to being put into cattle-trucks and sent into the British and American Occupied Zones of Germany. Later they were also sent into the Russian Occupied Zone...

In April, 1947, expulsion measures were once more enforced. Train after train rolled along through Silesia, carrying the expellees westwards. Transportation of the expellees was organized by the Expulsion Committee in Reichenbach and they were obliged to leave at fortnightly intervals. The last 1,500 expellees from the district left on May 27th, 1947...

On April 13th, 1946, my family were evicted for the fourth and last time. A few weeks previously, however, they were forced to share the small room in which they lived, with several Poles. Incidentally, Poles were assigned to all the rooms occupied by German families in order to make conditions even more unbearable for the latter. The owners of the houses in question were as a rule evicted first and a seal was then promptly affixed to the door. The only belongings my family had when they were expelled were some blankets and a little luggage. The expellees were sent to the town of Reichenbach, which was about three miles away. There the Poles made them line up in front of the domestic science school until the evening and searched them thoroughly. A lot of the expellees even had to get undressed. Some of the women were forced to take off their corsets whilst the Poles searched them for valuables. The expellees were not allowed to take either jewelry, men's clothing, or their savings-bank books with them. 500 Reichsmarks in cash was all that was allowed per person. After travelling in cattle-trucks for five days, they eventually reached Kohlfurt, where they were taken over by the British and given some food for the first time during the journey. Upon arriving in Westphalia, the expellees were taken to various collecting camps, and from there, after a time, were assigned to temporary quarters.

*Report No. 119***Breslau**¹⁶⁶

The city of Breslau numbered 213,459 Catholics (1942) and 382,624 persons of other denominations (1929) and included 31 parishes and curacies and many mediaeval churches¹⁶⁷

*An Account of the Incidents which occurred in Cathedral Street
in Breslau, in February, 1946*

In February of this year, after the German inhabitants of various districts of the city had been terrorized for weeks and months by armed Polish marauders, the persons living in the vicinity of the cathedral were likewise subjected to systematic terrorist measures.

On February 6th, 1946, at seven o'clock in the morning, as Renate B., a young girl of fifteen, who lived in the parish of St. Maria auf dem Sande, was on her way to attend the children's mass in St. Sebastian's Chapel at the Church of St. Maria auf dem Sande she was stopped near to the Chapel by a Polish militiaman. He dragged her into a demolished building near the Freiburg Station, raped her and stole her clothes. — On February 10th, at two o'clock in the middle of the night, armed marauders entered the house at No. 8, Cathedral Street, which was inhabited by the cathedral-organist. They first of all raided the ground-floor apartment belonging to Mr. R., the teacher, and robbed him of the last of his possessions, including his last pair of shoes and trousers, with the result that he was unable to perform his duty as organist at the Church of St. Maria next morning. Then they proceeded to loot the apartment belonging to Mr. L., the schoolmaster, and his family, in the same house. — On February 13th, at eleven o'clock at night, marauders raided the house at No. 9, Cathedral Street, in which the offices of Prelate Dr. S., a member of the cathedral chapter and a professor at the university, were located. One of the marauders forced Prelate S. to sit on the floor and then proceeded to threaten him with a revolver. Whenever Prelate S. moved or attempted to remonstrate the man hit him on the head with a whip. Prelate S. was so badly hurt that he was unable to hold his lectures for a couple of days. In the meantime the rest of the marauders ransacked the house and removed whatever appeared to them to be of value and took all the things away on a lorry, which they had waiting in readiness in front of the house. They even raped the sixty-year old wife of Dr. V., who had been turned out of his practice and his home in January, and to whom Prelate S. had given accommodation. — On February 15th, the house at No. 7, Cathedral Street, which was inhabited by N., a member of the cathedral chapter, was also raided. Despite the fact that all the doors and windows were barricaded, Polish marauders managed to enter the house through a

¹⁶⁶ s. *Beitraege*, Vol I, p 59.

¹⁶⁷ For details regarding the date of erection of the churches in Breslau see *Handbuch fuer das katholische Schlesien*, loc cit

window which faced the yard. N. was subjected to the same treatment as Prelate S. One of the men kept guard and hit him in the face each time he attempted to speak. The rest of the marauders meanwhile looted the house and molested the women who had taken refuge there. They raped the sister of Z., a theological student. — On February 16th, at ten o'clock at night, a crowd of about thirty marauders assembled in front of the statue of St. John Nepomuk, near to the Church of the Holy Cross, and then proceeded to raid and loot the vicarage nearby, after the terrified inhabitants had previously fled. — On February 24th, marauders, who were attired in Russian and Polish uniforms but who only spoke Polish, broke into the house inhabited by the Sisters of Charity, at No. 4, Kapitelweg. The nuns, who had lost most of their possessions during the dreadful siege, were now robbed of the last of their belongings and only managed to escape being raped by fleeing, which was by no means easy. In addition to all these incidents, the cathedral was also raided and looted on February 10th, as well as the tiny chapel of St. Egidius, adjoining the cathedral, where marauders stole the tabernacle.

I have made these statements to the best of my knowledge and in accordance with the truth, and would be willing to swear to the authenticity of my account any time.

Report No. 120

Breslau, the Parish of St. Henry's¹⁶⁸

As regards St. Henry's Church itself, both towers were destroyed by shells, the roof was damaged, the vestry, the high altar and part of the nave as far as the chancel were demolished by bombs, and one of the two valuable mediaeval Gothic altar-pieces (donated by His Eminence Cardinal Kopp) was smashed. If the Germans had been allowed to repair the damage immediately, the church could no doubt have been saved. As if by a miracle, the cross at the side of the church and the statue of the Holy Virgin inside the church, facing the chancel, were completely undamaged. The vicarage had been partly demolished by bombs, and on May 9th, 1945, that is to say immediately after the capitulation, there were only three rooms and the kitchen which were habitable. On May 11th, the vicarage was set fire to, and completely demolished. All the files and books, church-registers, parochial records, and fittings of the various church-buildings were destroyed during this fire. Practically all the other buildings on Lehmgruben Street, including the chapel, the convent and all the other buildings belonging to the Poor Sisters of Our Lady, were also set fire to on May 11th. St. Anna's Hospital which belonged to the Sisters of St. Vincent was spared. The nuns had sought refuge at the parcel depot of the customs-house, but took over the hospital again at the end of May. In addition to the church and the vicarage, the

¹⁶⁸ s *Betraege*, Vol I, p. 32 ff — Cf. also *St Heinrichsbrieife*, Viersen

parish of St. Henry's also possessed a kindergarten (No. 20, Lehmgruben Street), a house at No. 176, Augusta Street, which included the parish-hall and also a convent of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Charles Borromeo, and a dwelling-house at No. 145, Augusta Street. These buildings were all demolished by bombs or fire and all the fittings were destroyed. In accordance with ecclesiastical regulations Archpresbyter Dr. R. had deposited all the funds belonging to the church as well as his own private money with the bank. All this money was confiscated by the Russians. As a result of the war the parishioners and the priest were deprived of everything — their church and even their tabernacle.

... On the night before Christmas Eve, 1945, four Polish marauders, attired in militia uniform, entered St. Henry's vicarage with the aid of skeleton-keys. They dragged the priest out of bed, took him into his study and held him down on a chair, whilst they pressed three revolvers against his forehead and his temples and dazzled his eyes with two powerful lamps. In the end he fainted and was unconscious for about half an hour. When he remonstrated with the marauders and pointed out that he was a Catholic priest, they replied in German, "Yes, we know that. That's why we're here". On the pretext of searching for firearms, ammunition, and wireless sets, they looted the house and robbed him of all his belongings, — his shoes, underwear, suits, coats, etc., and even his handkerchiefs. Next morning, which was Christmas Eve, he had to borrow a pair of trousers and shoes, etc., so as to be able to hold divine service.

In co-operation with the charity society the various Breslau parishes collected gifts for the German soldiers who had been prisoners-of-war in Russia and who had now been released and had arrived in Brockau. On the Monday after Christmas Eve the priest and some of the women of the parish were taking the things they had collected to the charity society collecting-point on a cart, when they were stopped in Rubens Street by a Polish guard. After having been made to stand on the street for several hours, they were finally taken along to the Polish headquarters by a number of armed guards. After being ill-treated in an abominable manner — hit in the face, beaten with cudgels, kicked in the knees, and interrogated in a most cynical manner, the priest was eventually released. The women meanwhile waited outside, praying in their terror. Next day, after considerable difficulties, the priest managed to recover the things which had been taken from them on the previous day. On this occasion he reported the fact to the Polish commanding officer that he had been robbed on the night before Christmas Eve. The reply was, "You're a German, so you no longer have a right to any possessions. We come and fetch what we need." Smiling ironically, the Polish commanding officer expressed his regret that the priest had been treated in rather a violent manner. The south-east district of Breslau behind the main station was a veritable inferno. Numerous gangs of marauders lived in the ruined buildings in this quarter, and not a night passed without houses in the vicinity being raided and looted and some German or other

being shot. One of the inhabitants of St. Henry's parish was stabbed in the neck with a bayonet in broad daylight, in his own garden, whilst his sixteen-year old son was beaten to death with the butt-end of a rifle. A so-called murder commission investigated the case, but there the matter ended! Scores of Germans were dragged into ruined buildings and robbed. If they attempted to put up any resistance or called for help, they were simply beaten and in some cases even shot. Night after night cries of help resounded through the streets, whilst the inhabitants of the houses which were in danger of being raided made a terrific din by beating pan-lids together, in the hopes of thus scaring the marauders away. Not even the dead were allowed to rest in their graves in peace. Marauders broke open several graves in St. Dorothea's cemetery, which was located in our parish, and actually removed gold teeth from the mouths of the dead. The south district of Breslau, as far into the city as Stein Street, had been part of the fighting zone, and as a result there were still a large number of mines in the streets. In the parish of St. Henry's alone about 200 persons either lost their lives through mines exploding or were taken to St. Anna's Hospital with lacerated limbs...

Report No 121

Breslau — The Convent of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd ¹⁶⁹

From November 15, 1859, onwards the nuns of the Sisterhood of the Good Shepherd in Breslau were in charge of the education, training and moral welfare of girls who needed reforming. The public chapel, dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, was built during the years 1883 to 1885 — Part of the convent was blown up during the siege of Breslau in 1945. The chapel, however, was spared.

... The advent of the Russians and Poles brought a serious famine in all the towns and villages, for they deprived the inhabitants of all the food they could find. They seized most of the cattle, and the distress of the population was very considerable everywhere. In June and July we still managed to supply many of the German inhabitants with soup every day, but after a while this, too, became impossible. I still grieve to think that I was often obliged to be hard-hearted and could no longer give them anything to eat, but we ourselves at the convent were already in great need and there were more than a hundred of us. — At the end of July the convent suffered another heavy blow. Some of our nuns were taken ill with typhus and on August 1st, one of them died, to be followed by seven others a few days later. Another nun and myself tended the sick and we were isolated for weeks, in fact, altogether for seven months, with the patients. The first cases we had were the nuns, and it was heart-breaking to see young lives end so tragically and prematurely. Most of those who died were between thirty-five and forty-five years of age. In

¹⁶⁹ s. *Beitraege*, Vol IV, p 324 ff

all our troubles and sorrow our prelate comforted and helped us. It was impossible for Germans to obtain coffins, and so we were obliged to wrap the dead in sheets, place them on boards, and take them to the cemetery ourselves on carts. This made us so indescribably sad and we wept bitterly as we took them to their last resting-place. The city gradually came to life again after the Poles had taken over the administration, and it was now possible to obtain food by means of exchange transactions. The inhabitants set about clearing away the debris in the streets, and gradually the city began to assume a tidier appearance. Many of the former inhabitants now returned to Breslau with the intention of settling down in their old homes once more, but most of them were bitterly disappointed, for the streets in which they had lived had disappeared and all that remained was a large open space, which was used as a black market. Practically every day we took in and sheltered people who had been turned out of their homes, and helped them in their need by giving them bedding and clothing. — In the autumn a Polish priest, a member of the Order of Salesian Fathers, was installed at the convent. In the spring the vicarage, which we had taken considerable trouble to have repaired, was occupied by three members of this same Order. They were assigned to the vicarage by the Polish apostolic administration and wanted to take over the church and the other building available. This gave rise to all kinds of difficulties, and in the end the head of the Polish apostolic administration threatened to seize our building, too. With the aid of a Polish professor, who was also a priest, we managed to hand over the convent to some Polish nuns who were also engaged in educational work. It was almost a year before they took over completely, but in the meantime they were very kind to us, and the Mother Superior was a most noble-minded woman. Unfortunately this was not the case everywhere, and the nuns of our order in Kattern and Beuthen suffered much hardship under the Polish nuns. During the night Poles now frequently raided German houses and beat the inhabitants and robbed them. Night after night these poor creatures could be heard screaming for help. On one occasion I very nearly lost my life. At one o'clock in the middle of the night one of the girls came and told me that there was a light burning in the cellar. I was just about to go down into the basement when, to my dismay, I suddenly saw a militiaman, armed with a rifle, coming towards me. I turned and ran up the stairs, calling for help. He pursued me and fired a shot. The bullet whizzed past my head and struck the clock over the stairs. Next night some Poles climbed onto the roof. Everyone in the house started calling for help, whereupon they began firing shots at the windows. One of the bullets landed right in front of the wooden tabernacle, which we used to remove from the church every night for safety and take to the convent. On countless occasions like this, God in His Mercy protected us.

During the night of November 15th to 16th, 1946, twenty men of the Polish secret police raided the house. They searched all the rooms and removed all watches, clocks, money, and cutlery, etc. At about five o'clock in the morning they then arrested the Mother Superior, her

assistant, and the gentleman from the charity society who was staying at the convent, allegedly on account of espionage. It was a terrifying experience. They locked us in a room with armed militiamen to guard us and searched practically all of us. It was bitter cold and most of us were only half-dressed. Thus we constantly lived in fear and trembling as to what the Poles would do next, and it was therefore with considerable relief that we learnt on April 18th, 1947, that we were to be expelled. Incidentally, it was the day that our Mother Superior, her assistant, and the gentleman from the charity society were released from the prison-camp, together with a lot of other persons. On April 18th, we celebrated Holy Mass for the last time and gave thanks to the Lord for all the kindness and mercy we had received at the convent. At the end of the service the Polish priest, who had always been very good to us, gave us his blessing for our journey. He had always tried to help us whenever he could and on several occasions had even risked his own life for our sake. The tears rolled down his cheeks as he said the blessing, and he would have been only too glad to have been able to go with us. Together with three other nuns I was the last to leave the convent at about two o'clock in the afternoon. We then went along to the Polish headquarters, where we were to be searched for the last time prior to leaving. The Poles did not take any of my belongings, but several of the nuns and also some of the children were deprived of their possessions. Our sorrow at having to leave the convent was mitigated by our joy at being reunited to our beloved Mother Superior, who after spending five months in a prison-camp, had now been released and brought along to the Polish headquarters, together with a number of other prisoners, in order to be searched prior to leaving the country. Of course, she was not allowed to return to the convent. She little dreamt when she was arrested that she would never see it again. At about five o'clock in the afternoon we were taken to the station and put into the train. We were crowded into three trucks, but nevertheless we were thankful to have escaped all the misery and suffering we had gone through, at last. In the evening, as the train was still standing in the station, one of the Polish nuns brought the Mother Superior and her assistant some warm and strengthening food, for they were both of them completely exhausted and emaciated. At about one o'clock in the middle of the night three Polish militiamen, on duty at the station, wrenched open the door of the truck that we were in and promptly proceeded to rob us of various belongings and the small supply of food we had with us. Finally, at five o'clock in the morning the train set off, and we sang the hymn, "Dear Lord, we thank Thee", in gratitude for having been spared. Three days later we reached the frontier, that is to say Elsterhorst in the Russian Occupied Zone. We spent the night in the train but were taken along to a camp, which was a fairly long way away from the station, next day. The camp consisted of numerous wooden sheds surrounded by high barbed-wire fencing. We were assigned to one of the sheds, which was occupied by men, women and children. Prior to being sent to the shed all new arrivals had to take a shower-bath. Women and children all together in one room — completely naked. This, of

course, caused considerable indignation, and even those whose morals were not too strict were very embarrassed. After lengthy negotiations with the head of the camp, we nuns were spared the ordeal of the shower, and they sprayed us with a disinfectant powder instead. One of the men who was completely immoral said that sort of thing was punishable. The first night in the camp we were all of us soon sound asleep, as we were so tired after our journey and had not been able to get any proper sleep for a couple of nights. The beds in the shed consisted of bunks, one on top of the other, and the younger ones slept in the upper bunks. The bunks were made of raw wood and the only bedding in them was a little straw, but we were nevertheless grateful even for that. As there were two priests among the expellees, we were able to hold two masses in our shed every morning and devotions at seven o'clock each evening. The number of those who attended increased from day to day. The camp authorities allowed us to hold our Sunday services in the dance-hall, and it was packed with worshippers. Prelate P. and H.P.F. officiated and preached the sermons. It was deeply moving to hear all these persons, whom suffering and a common lot had united and who now in their great need sought strength and solace in the Lord, praying and singing the hymns. And God in His Mercy watched over us in our troubles. Some of the nuns were employed in the camp-hospital, whilst others were assigned to the job of peeling potatoes. For most of us these weeks in the camp were almost like a little holiday after all we had endured. On one occasion a baptism was held in our shed. The child had been born during the journey. It was a moving ceremony, and at the end of it we all sang a hymn. Then we gave the poor mother, who came from East Prussia, some linen and clothes and a pillow for her to use as a bed for her little baby. In those days so much suffering and need could be relieved by the most modest gift, and those who could still call some belongings their own were always willing to give to those who possessed nothing at all. — And now the time came for us to part. As we did not receive our official entry permits for the Western Occupied Zones in time, we were obliged to leave the camp and go to Eisenach. From here we then crossed the frontier illegally, at great risk and in fear and trembling of being caught by the Russians, and finally reached Bebra at the end of May, 1947. The nuns at the convent of our order in M. very kindly gave us accommodation. I very often think of Silesia and I hope and pray that all the Silesians may some day be able to return to their beloved country and may, when their earthly race is run, come to their everlasting home above, of which no one will then deprive them.

*Report No. 122***The Parish of Breslau-Lissa¹⁷⁰**

The parish of Breslau-Lissa included 5,420 Catholics (1942) and 8,543 persons of other denominations (1929). A church (St Hedwig's) is mentioned in historical records in 1299, and it probably already existed as early as 1248. The present church dates from the end of the Middle Ages and the vaulting from the eighteenth century. The chapel of ease (St Andrew's) at Breslau-Sabelwitz is mentioned in historical records as the parish-church in 1353. The present church was originally a timbered building, but was renovated in 1924.

... Advancing from the direction of Neumarkt the Russians entered Lissa on Friday, February 16th, 1945, and proceeded to defend the bridge across the Weistritz. Only a few of the inhabitants of Stabelwitz had remained behind and they now took refuge in the air-raided shelters at the leather-factory and at W.'s. Practically all the houses were untenanted as most of the inhabitants had been evacuated... On the Monday morning, February 19th, we emerged out of the shelters once more...

The days that followed were dreadful. We womenfolk were obliged to hide in the hen-cotes during the day and at night for a whole week so as to avoid being raped by the Russians... On March 1st, 1945, as I was on my way to report at the headquarters of the Russian commanding officer I met Father Prietzel and Sister R. who were also going there for the same purpose... That same afternoon Father Prietzel, together with some other persons who had likewise been arrested, was taken along to a building in Rawitscher Street and detained in a cellar there for several days. That same evening the Russians set fire to the houses belonging to D., B., M., and B. in Neumarkt Street. During the next few days a number of houses in Lissa, Goldschmieden, Stabelwitz, and Hermannsdorf were destroyed by fire, and Breslau, to the west, was a sheet of fire for days on end. The beautiful old chapel in Stabelwitz was also destroyed by fire. I saw the fire in the distance, but it was not until some time later that I learnt that the little chapel had been destroyed...

All men up to the age of fifty had to report to the Russians and many of them were never heard of again. Of the persons who were arrested by the Russians in March, twenty died in the camp at Kandatchka on the Arctic Ocean. Mr. P., the post-office clerk, and Miss T. returned. In May and June, 1945, many of the persons who had been evacuated returned to Lissa, which made things slightly better for us. We were given no food rations whatsoever. The only persons who received any food at all were those who worked for the Russians. They were given a little bread and soup and sometimes a little meat.

In the course of time the church was set in order once more and we were able to hold divine service there again...

¹⁷⁰ s *Beitraege*, Vol III, p 147 ff

One afternoon in October, 1945, as I was visiting my mother's grave I heard a noise inside the church and went to see what was the matter. The iron gate was locked as usual, the light in the church was dim as it was already three o'clock in the afternoon, but I managed to make out the figure of a Russian. He was just in the act of tearing down the Sanctuary Lamp. The tabernacle and the altar-statues were lying on the altar-steps. I hurriedly backed out of the church and ran across to the convent and told the nuns what had happened. Miss B. ran across to the vicarage and Father Pr. appeared on the scene. He unlocked the iron gate inside the church and we went in. Father Pr. called, "What are you doing here?" and went up to the Russian. Meanwhile Sister R. had gone to fetch a Polish guard from Dyhernfurth Street (there were already some Poles and a Polish commanding officer in Lissa at the time), and a Polish guard and some soldiers now arrived and arrested the Russian and took him to the headquarters of the commanding officer. Father Pr. and a few other persons went along with them. When they reached Neumarkt Street the Russian suddenly jumped on a passing lorry and escaped. We went back to the church and inspected the damage he had done. The crucifixes and the pictures on all the altars had been torn down, and the font and the confessional had been damaged. He had just been about to smash the tabernacle with a hatchet when they had arrested him. Fortunately, however, the tabernacle was not damaged, and the Consecrated Host had thus been saved...

On October 23rd or 24th, 1945, five of us went to church in order to attend early morning mass at seven o'clock. When we got there we found the church-door locked. Miss B. went to the vicarage and asked them to open the church for us. She was informed by the Polish woman living there that all the Germans had been arrested. In the meantime some Germans passed by and told us that Mr. G. and his son had also been arrested. We went along to Mrs. G. and she told us that about twenty Germans had been arrested the previous evening, between ten o'clock and midnight. They included Father Prietzel, his sister, sister-in-law, and servants, some of the young men of Lissa, both Protestant and Catholic, Mr. M.'s niece, the vicar (Protestant), and G. Father Prietzel, Mr. G.'s son, and some of the young men who were arrested are at present in a Polish prison.¹⁷¹ Miss P. was later released and sent to D. as an expellee.

After having been exempted from expulsion in June and also at the beginning of October, 1946, I was finally ordered to leave on December 9th, 1946. As there were only a few Germans left in Lissa I complied with this order. After a week in Breslau, in Feld Street, I arrived here on December 23rd, 1946, together with the other expellees. Mr. Koch, the saddler, and many other persons died on the journey. Mr. Matzner, the tradesman, died in B. in May, 1947.

¹⁷¹ Father Bernhard Prietzel of Breslau-Lissa, born November 18, 1881, ordained June 22, 1908, was then detained in various Polish prisons and died on September 29, 1951, in Naugard (Novogard) near Stettin (Szczecin) whilst still in Polish captivity

*Report No. 123***The Parish of Breslau-Ohlewiesen (Tschansch)**¹⁷²

The parish of Breslau-Ohlewiesen included 2,550 Catholics (1942) and 2,742 persons of other denominations (1929). The church (Our Lady, Mother of Mercy) was built in 1909. Ohlewiesen was originally part of the parish of St Mauritius' but became an independent curacy on December 18, 1915, and a parish on April 14, 1916.

During the eight o'clock service on the Sunday morning, February 18th, 1945, an S.S. officer came to me and asked permission to set up a machine-gun — or something like it — in the attic of the vicarage. After the service, as we were just in the act of removing the most important things from the vicarage to the cellar at the convent, I happened to catch sight of several men and a woman through the fence of the convent garden. All of them were carrying grenades. I said to the Reverend Father, "Why, they look like Russians!" Next moment they entered the yard and greeted us quite amiably and told us to go into the cellar immediately. — We sat there in the cellar, in front of the tabernacle, and waited in suspense. We began to hope that the Russians might not be so bad after all when we saw one of them, an elderly man, who had apparently realized that the tabernacle contained the Consecrated Host, take off his cap, fold his hands and pray...

We had been on the estate at Kraftborn about a fortnight when the rest of the inhabitants of Ohlewiesen arrived there. They had been held up in Wasserborn and had had some extremely unpleasant experiences there. We were so happy to see them once more. The menfolk, including the parish-priest, had been taken to some place near Ohlau, where they had been forced to work in a mill. I was very glad to hear that the Reverend Father was still alive. About a fortnight before Easter, 1945, he suddenly arrived at the estate in Kraftborn, completely exhausted and emaciated. The Russians had sent him away as he was no longer fit to do the heavy work expected of him at the mill. He was so happy to be reunited with his parishioners once more. Though I must say, I hardly recognized him when he arrived at the estate — he was so thin and had a beard, and he was wearing a jacket which was too small and the sleeves were so short that they did not even cover his arms. There was a German doctor from Breslau at the Russian field-hospital and he managed to get the Reverend Father employed there. In this way he was at least spared having to do heavy work, and all he had to do at the hospital was draw temperature-charts. What made us happiest of all was that on the Sunday before Easter we were able to celebrate Holy Mass at the hospital for the first time. It was truly amazing how we managed to obtain all the things needed for mass. One of the Grey Sisters in Kraftborn supplied us with an alb and the necessary linen, she also baked some holy wafers, and the Russian commandant gave us a glass of wine.

¹⁷² s. *Beitraege*, Vol III, p. 151 ff

The service was held during our mid-morning break from half-past ten to half-past eleven, as we were obliged to work on Sundays, too. These services were such a consolation'...

At the end of May, 1945, the Reverend Father and most of the parishioners were allowed to return to Ohlewiesen. I had to remain in Kraftborn until June 15th, as there was no one to take my place.

With the belongings we had managed to collect in Kraftborn we tried to start life anew on our return to Ohlewiesen. The vicarage had been badly damaged, and the Reverend Father was obliged to go and live at the convent. There was plenty of life at the convent, for the nuns and their young charges had meanwhile returned. It was not long, however, before they had to leave the convent to make room for some Polish nuns. The Reverend Father now had to find private accommodation. The house in which I had previously lived had been destroyed by fire, but I managed to find accommodation in a private house for three months. We were then turned out of the house once more, and a woman whom I knew very kindly took me in. The parishioners soon set about tidying up and cleaning the church and repairing the roof, so as to enable us to hold divine service again. We got on very well with the first Polish priest we had and also with the second one. The Reverend Father was taken seriously ill a short time afterwards. He developed insulin-poisoning and was unconscious for three days, and we never thought he would recover. But his hour had not yet come. He was in the hospital of the Ursulines at Carlowitz for several weeks. In the meantime we were obliged to attend the Polish services. The number of parishioners had increased considerably since our return. The sufferings and hardships the Reverend Father had been forced to endure had undermined his constitution to such an extent that he never managed to recover completely from his illness.

I forgot to relate that when the Reverend Father returned from Kraftborn the people of Ohlewiesen and of Breslau were overjoyed as they all thought he was dead. In fact, on various occasions the people of Breslau were told in church that he was dead, and his brother in K. had already held a requiem for him.

Even though we got on very well with the Polish priests the Reverend Father took the fact that he had been deprived of all his rights in his own parish very greatly to heart. The second Polish priest, who was installed in the parish in 1947, set about tidying up the vicarage. I, too, helped to clear out all the rooms which were so familiar to me and make them habitable once more. On numerous occasions Dr. Metzger had visited the house and tried to salvage his valuable books and documents, and we had often barricaded the windows and doors, but the place had been broken into again and again. As most of the parishioners had returned to Ohlewiesen, religious instruction classes were once more resumed. One of the nuns was allowed to hold the classes in the room at the vicarage formerly used for this purpose. Unfortunately, however,

this was not long the case, and our nuns were obliged to make room for some Polish nuns. The Polish nuns, it must be admitted, were very kind indeed to us. Right up to the time we were expelled they allowed the Reverend Father and us Germans to use their chapel on weekdays and helped the Reverend Father in every possible way. He had become almost completely blind, and every Sunday when we assembled in our church we wondered whether it would perhaps be the last time that he would be able to hold the service. On several occasions he was obliged to leave whilst celebrating Holy Mass because he was seized with an attack of faintness. The Polish priest then very kindly went on with the service or took charge completely, and he even allowed the gospel to be read in German and the congregation to sing the hymns in German...

Since the death of his sister in 1943 the Reverend Father used to visit the cemetery every day. He continued to do so right up to the very end and, despite his blindness, used to go there alone as he knew the way so well. On two or three occasions, however, he fell whilst on his daily walk and from then onwards his housekeeper escorted him. The fact that he was now obliged to rely on others more and more grieved him deeply. He could no longer read nor write a letter. How I enjoyed the hours we spent together, reading and discussing the Old Testament. Towards the end, however, he was no longer able to concentrate for very long and his mental powers gradually deteriorated. As he could no longer see to read his breviary, his favourite form of prayer was now the rosary. Long before there had ever been any talk of his being evacuated or expelled from Ohlewiesen, he had once said that he hoped he would be able to celebrate his jubilee as a priest there before he had to resign his office. His wish was granted. In June, 1947, on the day of his fortieth anniversary as a priest, he preached his last sermon. The members of the congregation were moved to tears, both by the thought that this was the last time they would listen to their beloved priest and by the sight of his helplessness. He had already been informed that he was to be expelled, and next day, accompanied by his housekeeper, he rode through his parish for the last time. Though he could no longer see his faithful flock he still loved it with all his heart. During the months and years when we had been forced to endure so much suffering and hardship he had been wont to say, "It is death to prepare us for death."¹⁷³

¹⁷³ For details regarding the death of Dr Konrad Metzger, the parish-priest of Breslau-Ohlewiesen, who was famous both in Germany and abroad for his lectures and books on spiritual welfare in cities in modern times, cf *The Martyrdom of Silesian Priests 1945/46*, p 60 ff

*Report No. 124***The Parish of Breslau-Oswitz ¹⁷⁴**

The parish of Breslau-Oswitz included 758 Catholics (1942) and 1,201 persons of other denominations (1929). Until 1900 Breslau-Oswitz belonged to the parish of St Michael's in Breslau and during the following years to the parish of St Boniface's. After World War I it became an independent parish. A building formerly used as an inn served as the vicarage and the church for the time being. The church was later restored and dedicated to St Theresa and the Holy Child Jesus. The pilgrims' chapel on the Sacred Hill of Oswitz belonged to St Clare's Convent in Breslau until the secularization in 1810. The chapel was renovated in 1924. It was the property of the Catholic parish.

I should herewith like to relate some of the incidents which occurred during the time that I was in charge of the large municipal cemetery in Breslau-Oswitz, namely from June, 1945, until July, 1946, under the administration of the Poles.

Almost every day the Poles would stop members of the cemetery staff as the latter were on their way to work and, despite the fact that all those who worked at the cemetery had special permits, would either take them off to work somewhere else or else rob them.

Regardless of the fact that there were people in the cemetery and services were being held, the Poles constantly fired shots in the cemetery whilst funerals were being held, thus endangering the lives of mourners and cemetery staff alike. Women were even raped whilst attending the funeral of relatives.

On numerous occasions Poles broke open the coffins in the mortuary and dragged out the corpses. In June, 1946, they broke open some of the family-vaults and smashed and sawed the metal coffins in them to bits.

Practically every day, corpses, which were completely naked and had been battered about and were so emaciated that they were almost skeletons, were deposited at the cemetery. At certain intervals members of the cemetery staff had to go along to one of the hospitals in the town and collect the corpses there. The latter had been kept there for several months and were completely decomposed and covered with maggots.

At the end of January, 1946, Kurt Kretschmer, one of the grave-diggers, was found shot in plot 36.

In the spring Karl Guckel, one of the men who worked at the cemetery, found the body of a man hanging from a birch-tree. It was obvious that a fire had been kindled at the foot of the tree. The man was burnt beyond recognition.

*Report No. 125***The Parish of Altenrode, near Breslau¹⁷⁵**

The parish of Altenrode included 559 Catholics (1942) and 1.469 persons of other denominations (1929). The church (St Philomena's) is mentioned in historical records in 1299. Altenrode later belonged to Sachwitz but has been an independent parish since 1853. The south portal of the present church probably dates from the fifteenth century.

On Saturday, February 10th, 1945, the Russian troops, advancing from Kanth, reached Altenrode and began shelling the village. The men of the Volkssturm thereupon beat a hasty retreat and fled from the village as fast as they could. Only a few families remained in Altenrode, either because they had failed to leave in time or because they chose to remain. The rest of the villagers took off on their bicycles and retreated in the direction of the Zobten. When we were a couple of miles away from the village we saw that the huge barn on the estate was on fire...

... That same evening we heard the sad news that some of those who had remained behind in Altenrode had been shot by the Russians. Farmer Alfred W., who was very well-liked in the village, and Mr. K., who worked on the estate, were both shot that night, whilst Eduard E. and H. were wounded. The same fate befell some of the men of a labour service company who were captured by the Russians in Altenrode...

It was with considerable fear and misgivings that we waited up in the mountains for the Russians to occupy this district after the capitulation on May 8th, 1945. But we did not have long to wait. With the advent of the Russians a period of terror and suffering began for the women and girls, and many of them hid in the nearby forests and mountain gorges. The war was over, and we all of us longed to return home to our native village and start life anew there with fresh hope and courage... Finally, after trudging along for days and having to cope with all kinds of difficulties, we reached the former fighting zone not far away from Altenrode. We were filled with horror as we saw the dreadful havoc wrought by the war, — debris, ruins, trenches, wire entanglements, bridges which had been blown up, abandoned cars and lorries, and placards bearing the warning "Danger! Mines!". We almost lost hope. We began to fear that our village would probably present the same appearance and that we might not even be able to find accommodation there. It was with considerable misgivings, therefore, that we approached Altenrode. But it was at least some consolation to us when we caught our first glimpse of the church spires in the distance. We finally arrived in Altenrode on Whit Sunday, May 20th, 1945, after having been robbed of our belongings again and again on the way. We were very much relieved to find that the village did not present as

¹⁷⁵ s. *Beitraege*, Vol. II, p. 70 ff.

dreadful an appearance as we had feared. Only a few of the buildings had been demolished during the fighting, namely H.'s inn, Reinhold K.'s inn, and the houses belonging to Mr. L., the shoemaker, and Max K. A large number of roofs had been damaged, either slightly or considerably, and there were numerous broken windows. But at least we were back home again and we all of us managed to find accommodation. Our houses were a dreadful sight, however. Household utensils and furniture were missing in most of the houses and there were heaps of filth and dirt and human excrements in all the rooms. In fact, the place resembled a stable that had never been cleaned. Our first task, therefore, was to clear away all the dirt and endeavour to make the place as habitable as we could. We managed to obtain some furniture out of air-raided shelters and tried to make things as comfortable as possible.

Both the churches in the village presented an equally dreadful appearance. Russian hordes had even raided these sacred buildings. The sacred precincts had been desecrated, the altars had been damaged, pictures torn down and trampled on, the organ had been smashed and the music scattered all over the place; the hands, outstretched in blessing, of several statues of saints had been hewn off, and there were piles of filth and rubbish everywhere. Sacred vestments and church-banners lay buried under the filth and the rubbish. The whole place bore evidence of wilful vandalism. After we had managed to clean up our houses as best as we could, we set about the task of tidying up the churches as we were eager to hold services again as soon as possible...

Russian and Polish marauders now raided the village and stole whatever they set eyes on. We dreaded their nightly visits most of all as they were always drunk and not only stole on these occasions, but also tried to get hold of the women and girls. Despite the fact that we barricaded the doors and windows of our houses, they would force an entry, swearing volubly and firing shots at random. The poor women who failed to escape in time through the windows were the helpless victims of these brutal marauders. Many of the women and girls of the village spent the night out in the fields or in the forest nearby, so as not to be molested by these fiends. Practically every night cries of help resounded in the streets, accompanied by the ceaseless sound of shooting. The marauders grew bolder from day to day. They would threaten us with their revolvers, level them at us and then fire shots at random into the air so as to terrify us into handing over the last of our possessions. The farmers no longer ventured to take their horses out into the fields as the marauders simply unyoked them and went off with them. When they discovered that there was nothing more to be had in the fields, they began to raid the farms and steal the horses, cattle, and carts, as they pleased. And there was nowhere for the Germans to seek help or protection. There was a Russian commandant in the village whose headquarters were at K.'s, but there was little the Russian soldiers there could do to remedy these dreadful conditions, since the marauders had usually vanished by the time the Russians appeared on the scene. The

Germans were simply poor, defenceless victims, at the mercy of all who chose to persecute them...

During these months of suffering and hardship, when we were so often reduced to utter despair, the church was our only consolation and solace. At first we attended the church in Martinsgrund, but later on Reverend Father H.¹⁷⁶ used to come to our church every Sunday and celebrate Holy Mass with us. We were very grateful indeed to him, as our own priest was unable at that time to return to Altenrode from Saxony. After an extremely dangerous and tedious journey, he finally arrived in Altenrode in the middle of the summer and was greeted with great joy on the part of his parishioners. He took up his quarters at the vicarage, which had been ransacked and looted to such an extent that it was practically empty.

To add to our distress, the Polish militia now transferred its headquarters to Altenrode and moved into the house belonging to the Protestant school. The militia tormented the German inhabitants in every way imaginable and resorted to all kinds of terrorist measures, which included detaining Germans in cellars and beating them with rubber cudgels. It was not long before a Polish priest was installed in the village. At first he lived at the Villa Brix and later on at the small farm belonging to Kunick. He spoke German fairly fluently and was a kind-hearted man. He strongly censured the behaviour of his fellow-countrymen, and on numerous occasions was extremely kind to us.

Conditions as regards food supplies for the Germans steadily went from bad to worse. We received no meat and no fats whatsoever, and sometimes not even bread. As a result, an epidemic of hunger-typhus broke out which claimed more than eighty victims among the villagers. Coffins were made out of old cupboards, but in cases where the latter were not available, the dead were wrapped in sheets and buried without a coffin.

Most of the Germans were so undernourished that they no longer had the strength to perform the strenuous and enormous amount of work demanded of them. Woe betide those who ventured to refuse to perform a task that was impossible and said, "I haven't the strength!" By way of answer the Polish militia beat them with rubber cudgels. Mrs. Schunke was beaten to such an extent that she later died. They even beat kind old Mr. Hanke, who most certainly was an excellent groom, and locked him up in a cellar for several days, despite the fact that he was nearly eighty years old. Very often the militia locked four or five men up in the cellars at the militia headquarters and left them to starve and shiver there for a number of days...

With but few exceptions, the Poles were addicted to alcohol. For this reason there was a secret distillery in practically every house and they used to make impure spirits from sugar beet snippings, potatoes, and

¹⁷⁶ The parish-priest at Martinsgrund

grain. They used to take this home-made alcohol with them when they went to their various places of amusement, as the monopoly spirits served at these places were much too dear for their liking. They also used their home-made alcohol to barter with the Russian soldiers...

... At the end of June, 1946, placards were affixed all over the village informing the Germans that they had to leave Silesia. They were also informed as to what they might take with them. All the villagers started packing their belongings, as none of them cared to remain in the village with the inhuman Poles. Very soon, however, we discovered that only the Germans living in the village, families with a lot of children, and old persons, were to be allowed to leave. All manual workers and all the persons who worked on the estate were forced to remain behind... At two-thirty in the morning, on Sunday, July 20th, 1946, the priest celebrated Holy Mass with us for the last time and prayed to God to bless us on our journey. It was a moving service and many of us wept at the thought that the time had now come to say farewell to Altenrode...

Singing our favourite folksongs, we rode through our native fields for the last time. After travelling via Kohlfurt and Marienburg, we finally arrived in Peine during the night of July 26th, 1946. We were later assigned to quarters either in Peine or in the rural areas near Peine. Peine has thus become our new home, but I do not think it will ever take the place of our beloved Silesia in our hearts. And so we all of us still long to be able to return there once more some day.

Report No. 125a

The Parish of Brockau, near Breslau¹⁷⁷

The parish of Brockau included 3,300 Catholics (1942) and 5,396 persons of other denominations (1929). The church (St. George's) was built in 1910 and 1911 and, to begin with, was under the administration of St. Mauritius' in Breslau. Brockau became an independent parish on May 25, 1914.

...On January 24th, 1945, the National Socialist district leader issued an order, to the effect that Brockau was to be evacuated, and the priest was informed that he, too, must comply with this order. That same evening he was taken to Schweidnitz in a motor-coach belonging to the National Socialist Welfare Organization, and left the Consecrated Host, which had until then been stored in the tabernacle in the church at Brockau, at the vicarage in Schweidnitz. He then proceeded as far as Wartha, hoping as we all did that he would soon be able to return to Brockau again. Father U. in Wartha, who died some time later, very kindly gave him accommodation. On February 4th, the priest returned to Brockau. There was already considerable fighting going on in the vicinity of Brockau, and soon afterwards the town was seized by the

¹⁷⁷ s. *Beitraege*, Vol. III, p. 160 ff.

Russians. The priest was in Wartha when it was occupied by the Russians at the beginning of May, 1945. He lost practically all his possessions. On May 24th, carrying the rest of his belongings, he set out on the return-journey to Brockau. He travelled by train as far as Nimptsch, and then tramped the rest of the way in the company of a Grey Sister and a carpenter from Brockau. They arrived in Brockau on May 29th, and were horrified to see all the damage that had been done. The vicarage had been demolished, either by bombs or by shells. All that was left were the foundation walls. The place was uninhabitable and the priest was obliged to seek accommodation elsewhere. The parish-church and the church club-house had suffered only relatively slight damage. The roof of the church was badly damaged, however, and as a result the interior had suffered from the effects of rain and snow. Eventually, however, thanks to the efforts of Mr.K., the bricklayer, and some voluntary helpers, including Miss S. and Miss G., a temporary roof was erected...

It was most unfortunate that the lock on the main door had been damaged and could not be repaired. Thus the door had to be left open, and hordes of Russian soldiers who passed through Brockau were constantly entering the church, desecrating the sacred precincts, soiling and stealing things. Indeed, they stole practically all the sacred vessels, a valuable monstrance, almost all the vestments, sacred linen, and organ-pipes, etc. Practically all the records, church-registers, furniture, library, clothes, linen, and household utensils at the vicarage had likewise disappeared. Most of the parish-library at the church club-house as well as the property belonging to the verger and his family was also destroyed.

All this damage was caused not only by Russian soldiers, but also by the Poles who appeared in Brockau soon after the town had been occupied by the Russians. Some of the Poles only stayed in the town a short time and then moved on; others, however, turned the Germans out of their houses, robbed them of all they possessed, and then moved into the houses themselves. For two whole years the Poles, and above all the Polish militia, continued to torture and torment the Germans in a most inhuman and brutal manner. The Germans were forced to do all kinds of heavy work. The pay and the food they received were completely inadequate. Day after day valuable property belonging to Germans would arrive at the big goods station from all over the country, only to be reloaded and dispatched eastwards. It was a sight which depressed us considerably, as can well be imagined.

But what distressed us even more was the sight of the many German prisoners-of-war, who arrived at the goods station in trains from the East which stopped at Brockau for a while. The men were a pitiful sight. Their clothes were ragged and filthy, and they themselves were emaciated and pale. There were several cattle-trucks on each train crowded with men who were ill. They received practically no medical attention at all, with the result that many of them died whilst the train was standing in the goods station at Brockau. They were then hurriedly buried in the vicinity of the station. As a rule one or more trucks on

each train contained the bodies of men who had died during the journey, and they, too, were buried near the station. The priest administered the last sacrament to many of those who were dying, whilst the living received gifts which had been collected by the Breslau charity society and the various parishes of Breslau. As the traffic at the station was in no way organized, it was possible for all kinds of rabble to enter the town unchecked. They proceeded to haunt Brockau and the surrounding districts, and it was hardly safe for Germans to be out of doors. On one occasion when the priest was waiting for a funeral in the cemetery, which happened to be deserted at the time, two bandits suddenly appeared and snatched his surplice and his gold watch from him and robbed him of 100 zloty. Then they seized hold of a lath and were about to hit him on the head with it, but apparently they suddenly thought better of it and vanished. Russian soldiers frequently took up their quarters in the church. They spread out their straw-mattresses on the floor, cooked their meals there, played cards on the carpet in front of the altar, and smoked, etc....

One day at the beginning of January, 1947, we were ordered to line up outside the townhall early in the morning. Despite the fact that the weather was bitterly cold, we were kept waiting there for hours until finally, late in the afternoon, the order was given for the trek to set off... By the time we reached Breslau it was dark and we were completely exhausted. We were then taken to a camp, namely a dilapidated and filthy building, formerly used as a school, near the check-office. We spent the night outside in the yard, guarding our luggage and trying to ward off marauders who wanted to rob us. After a couple of days the Poles "checked" us, during which procedure the Polish customs officials took most of our belongings and our money from us. Finally, after waiting about for what seemed an endless age, we were taken to Freiburg Station in Breslau. On the way we were molested and robbed by rabble again and again. At about midnight they put us into cattle-trucks which were dark and cold, and the train set off westwards... Like many of the expellees, the priest developed serious frost-bite on his hands and feet during the journey, and when we reached our destination he had to be taken to hospital, and spent three months there. On being discharged he was installed in the diocese of Berlin. The inhabitants of Brockau are now scattered throughout Saxony, Thuringia, Westphalia, Oldenburg, and elsewhere, but they still continue to hope that times will change.

*Report No. 126***The Parish of Brueckenfelde (Polsnitz), near Breslau**¹⁷⁸

The parish of Brueckenfelde included 1,218 Catholics (1942) and 444 persons of other denominations (1929). A church (St Nicholas') is mentioned in historical records in 1298. The present church is late mediaeval and the choir late Gothic. The church was rebuilt in 1748. Until 1810 Brueckenfelde belonged to the Premonstratensians of St Vincent in Breslau as did also the affiliated parish of Albrechtsau (Woigwitz), the church of which (St John Nepomuk's) is mentioned in historical records in 1353 as the parish-church. The present church was built in 1569. The village of Krieblowitz and the estate and castle of Prince Bluecher belonged to Albrechtsau.

On February 9th, 1945, as we were celebrating Holy Mass, we suddenly heard the sound of artillery fire. We had no idea, however, that the Russian tank units had already advanced along the arterial road from Kostenblut and had reached Kanth. Towards noon the first lot of Russian tanks entered Brueckenfelde. As I hurried down into the cellar-like wash-house on the ground-floor in order to seek shelter there, I saw the first of the tanks come to a halt at the war memorial near to the vicarage. The Russians promptly opened fire as they assumed that there were German troops in the village, which was not, however, the case. The first shell hit the church-tower and tore a huge hole in the brickwork just beneath the bells. Another shell hit Mr. S.'s house, next to the vicarage. The hay-loft over the stables at Mr. S.'s, who lived on the other side of the vicarage, was also shelled and caught fire. I later discovered that there were numerous shot-holes in the walls of the vicarage, but they had been caused by bullets fired by the Russian infantry. As the Russians met with no resistance in Brueckenfelde the first lot of tanks moved off again in the direction of Kanth and Koslau. When they were out of sight the inhabitants emerged out of their houses, and several of the men, who had meanwhile donned their fire-brigade uniforms — unfortunately for some of them —, got to work with the hose-pipes in order to extinguish the fire at Mr. S.'s farm. I hurried into the church-tower to ascertain what damage had been done and then I went to Mr. S.'s. Miss S. had been killed by a shell splinter and Mr. S.'s foot had been torn off. As I heard a peculiar noise in the distance I hurried back to the vicarage. A few moments later a second Russian tank unit appeared in the village and opened fire at the people in the street, in particular at the firemen, as they apparently took them for German soldiers. Mr. Dorn, the grave-digger, Mr. Zegula, the joiner, and young Mr. George Glaubitz were killed on the spot. Mr. Boer, a former farmer, was also shot. Mr. Josef Kuschel was hit in the face by a shell and died a week later.

Despite the fact that he was sixty-nine years of age, my brother-in-law, Paul, was abducted by the Russians and taken east to work for them, together with several other men of the village. He never returned...

¹⁷⁸ s. *Beitraege*, Vol II, p. 144 ff.

The Russians had ransacked the church and thrown all the vestments onto the floor. The steel tabernacle, however, had not been damaged, as I discovered when I opened it. I was told that on one occasion the church was actually used as a cinema...

The hole in the church-tower was eventually repaired and the interior of the church tidied up so that services could once more be held. Mr. T., the choirmaster in W., repaired the organ and used to play at the services, as Mr. K., the choirmaster in Brueckenfelde, had been abducted by the Russians. According to reliable information he later died in Russia. At the chapels of ease in Landau and Albrechtsau (Woigwitz) services were also resumed again. Apart from a few broken windows, both the chapels were undamaged. The organ in the chapel at Landau, however, could no longer be used, and the chalice and the monstrances had been smashed. The steel tabernacle, too, was ruined...

On February 11th, 1945, Russian tanks once more entered the village of Albrechtsau during the night. The Russian soldiers behaved in an abominable manner, especially towards the women and girls. They threatened to shoot all those who ventured to put up any resistance. The villagers were horrified at the dreadful behaviour of the Russians. The latter smashed all the statues and sacred pictures, etc. They broke open the vault containing the remains of Field Marshal Prince Bluecher and his family, and scattered the mortal remains of the Field Marshal. His head was missing afterwards. Polish marauders broke open the family-vault behind the Bluecher vault, they removed the shroud from a female corpse (mummified) and stood it up naked. — A new commandant was assigned to A. He was a brutal and cowardly fellow, and his right-hand man was an Upper Silesian who had been a member of the German S.S. for two years and had then deserted and gone over to the Russians. He was a true Bolshevik, and actually broke open the steel tabernacle in the Catholic church in A. and damaged the altar and the organ...

Most of the parochial registers were undamaged. The only thing that was missing was the last register of baptisms for Brueckenfelde which contained all the entries of the past ten years. It was therefore no longer possible to furnish people with copies of the entries.

On June 29th, 1945, a detachment of Poles, whose papers were forged, appeared in A. and turned us out of the village within an hour's time. We proceeded to Kanth and I reported the incident to the Polish mayor there... Next day we were allowed to go back home again... Soon afterwards some Poles from the district of Lemberg arrived in the village and we were forced to give them accommodation. We lived in the same house with them until we were finally expelled from the village on July 19th, 1946... On the whole they were quite sensible. When we left they let us take as many of our belongings with us as we could stow. In fact, they even drove us to Kanth, where the Polish officials were to check and search us prior to leaving. Next afternoon they searched us, and some of us were relieved of our luggage, whilst others merely felt relieved when the Poles had finished with them! The Polish

officials, who were veritable robbers, simply deprived the German expellees of any things that took their fancy, especially blankets, materials, clothes, and shoes. And practically all the Germans were forced to part with something or other...

In 1945 death claimed many victims in the parish. A dreadful typhus epidemic raged throughout the entire district and spread rapidly as the people were so undernourished and weak. Whereas in normal times the death-rate per year had averaged 17, in 1945 the number of deaths in the parish, including the eleven Germans, Poles, and Frenchmen who were shot when the Russians invaded the village, totalled 142...

On July 16th, 1946, the Poles began expelling the German population of Kanth and the surrounding districts, and the inhabitants of Koslau were the first who were forced to leave. On July 20th, most of the inhabitants of Polsnitz, Spillendorf, Landau, Woigwitz, and Krieblowitz were turned out of their houses, farms, and family property, and sent to Kanth to be checked and searched by the Poles prior to leaving. On Sunday, July 21st, late in the evening, the expellees left by train from Kanth station and travelled west...

Report No. 127

Dreiteichen near Wangern, in the district of Breslau¹⁷⁹

Dreiteichen belongs to the parish of Wangern near Breslau. The parish included 1,127 Catholics (1942) and 1,459 persons of other denominations (1929). A church (St Hedwig's) is mentioned in historical records in 1309. The present church was built about 1500.

As Dreiteichen was near to the arterial road which was used by cattle treks and marauders, the village was raided practically every night. Horses were stolen, oxen were removed for the purpose of slaughtering them, cows disappeared, houses were looted, and women were raped. Cries of help resounded through the village every night. Young girls and women spent the night in the cornfields in order to avoid being molested by the marauders. We were forced to hand over all machines, bicycles, parts of bicycles and sewing-machines, etc. Persons found in possession of any of these things when their houses were searched were severely punished. — The Breslau University library was stored at the manor. I nailed up all the doors. Next day, however, they had all been broken open, and the Poles were using the books as fuel.

The Russians sent all the loot they seized to Russia, and there was an endless stream of traffic on the arterial road from four o'clock in the morning until ten o'clock at night. For weeks on end, cattle, horses, carts loaded with foodstuffs, cars and lorries bearing furniture, pianos, and beds moved along the road in an easterly direction. A long-distance power station which had been completed during the last year of the

¹⁷⁹ a. *Beitraege*, Vol. III, p. 169 ff

war was dismantled, and the entire equipment loaded onto lorries and removed. Power stations were raided and looted. Overhead wires were torn down, loaded onto lorries, and taken away. — The fields which had formerly been so fertile now resembled a desolate waste. Weeds grew in profusion, and the thistledown, whirled along by the wind, resembled a snow-drift.

Report No. 128

The Parish of Fuenfteichen (Meleschwitz), near Breslau¹⁸⁰

The parish of Fuenfteichen included 1,644 Catholics (1942) and 5,371 persons of other denominations (1929). A church (St Nicholas') is mentioned in historical records in 1399. The present church (Our Lady of the Holy Rosary) was probably built in 1618. Until 1810 Fuenfteichen belonged to the primates of Breslau.

There was a chapel, dedicated to the Holy Virgin, at the castle belonging to Count Saurma in Jeltsch.

The chapel of ease in Zindel (St Laurence's) is mentioned in historical records as the parish-church in 1353. The present church was built in 1803.

The evacuation of the various villages was badly organized and not carried out according to any definite plan. On January 20th, 1945, we were suddenly informed that the village was to be evacuated within two hours' time. The priest was unable to join the trek which left the village, as he had to officiate at a funeral. He did not leave the parish until January 22nd, and by then practically all the villagers had been evacuated... We were in Seitendorf which belongs to the parish of Rosenthal, near Habelschwerdt, when the Russians occupied the district after the capitulation. On the whole, the Occupation troops behaved fairly decently and were considerate as far as the property of the German inhabitants was concerned. On May 24th, the priest set out on his journey back to Fuenfteichen. He proceeded on foot via Frankenstein, Strehlen, and Ohlau, and, after passing through many completely deserted and devastated villages, finally reached Jeltsch and Meleschwitz on May 30th...

There were only a few families in Fuenfteichen when he returned, but gradually about forty-five families, that is to say about two hundred and fifty persons altogether, returned to the village. Most of the villagers had proceeded to Czechoslovakia and to Bavaria after leaving Fuenfteichen, and as the Poles had closed the frontiers they were now unable to return home. It was a great consolation to the priest on his return to find that the parish-church, the vicarage, and all the adjoining premises, as for instance the barn, stables, and coach-house, had not suffered any damage, at least as far as the exterior was concerned. The timbering of the stable-roof had been slightly damaged when the property next-door had caught fire. The Russians captured Fuenfteichen on January 23rd, 1945. They soon moved on, however, but were then

¹⁸⁰ s. *Beitraege*, Vol II, p. 159 ff

followed by troops who wrought havoc in the village. They either killed the cattle or drove it away; they impounded the stores of grain; they either used up or confiscated the food supplies which were available. Very soon there was a serious shortage of food in the village. One or two of the Russians, however, kindly gave the villagers who had remained in Fuenfteichen food. On the whole, cases of pillaging were comparatively few in number in those villages in which the Russian commanding officer was strict and insisted upon discipline among the troops. Most of the thefts and atrocities were committed by individual groups of soldiers, who had detached themselves from their units and now raided and looted the villages like brigands. They were the greatest menace. One of these marauders shot Father Gualbert, a member of the monastery of the Brothers of Charity. It was not until some time later that we found his body under a heap of debris. We buried him in the churchyard at Meleschwitz on August 23rd, 1945.

The Russians wrought havoc in the villages of Zindel and Lengefeld, and shot about ten persons. We buried the dead, together with the bodies of about twenty unknown soldiers, in a large grave in the Protestant and Catholic cemetery in Zindel. A special cemetery to the memory of those who lost their lives during the Russian invasion and occupation was laid out and consecrated in Lengefeld.

The interior of the parish-church was in a dreadful condition. The steel tabernacle had been torn out of the altar and smashed. All the statues had been knocked over and some of their heads had been smashed. We managed to mend them as best as we could, though the scars will always remain! Most of the organ-pipes had been removed and were lying scattered about the church. We managed to find most of them, however. The most serious damage was the theft and destruction of the sacred vessels and linen. All the vestments with the exception of four or five albs, which were badly damaged, had been stolen. There were only three chalices — the least valuable ones — left. All the sacred linen which had been stored at the convent of the Grey Sisters had been stolen. At the first service which was held the priest was obliged to wear a plain surplice as no albs, etc., were available. Thanks to the kind help of the Brothers of Charity and the church society in Breslau, we managed to obtain the necessary sacred linen, such as altar-cloths, corporals, etc., in the course of time. Unfortunately, however, we had to leave them behind for the Poles when we were expelled, as it was impossible for us to take them with us. — The various sacred vessels which had been stored in an iron safe at the vicarage, and also several vestments, carpets, and servers' cassocks were likewise stolen. The bill we make out for our "conquerors" some day will be a large one!

The vicarage had suffered much the same fate as the church. It took us days to clean up the filth and rubbish in the various rooms. All the pictures and statues had been smashed. Books and files had been strewn about the rooms. On Sunday, July 1st, 1945, whilst divine service was being held in the church, marauders broke into the vicarage. They

smashed the front door and ransacked and searched the house from top to bottom. The only garments the priest possessed after this incident had occurred were a shirt and a pair of trousers. The marauders had even stolen his last bit of bread.

About the middle of June, 1945, Poles began to settle in all the villages. At first they behaved fairly decently, but after the Potsdam Agreement they lorded it over the Germans. They turned the latter out of their homes and tormented and harassed them in every possible way.

The chapel at the castle in Jeltsch had not suffered any damage, but the Germans were not allowed to hold their services there, as the castle was occupied by a Russian unit. The convent belonging to the Grey Sisters had also been seized by Russians, but after a time the Russians left, and services were now held in the kindergarten at the convent... As the priest also had to hold services in Klarenwald, the German Catholics were sometimes obliged to attend the services held for the Poles. Very often it was not advisable for the Germans to attend church, as it was hardly safe to be out on the country-roads because there were so many marauders about. On the whole, the population suffered a great deal under the terrorist regime of the Polish militia. The militiamen were for the most part a lot of gangsters who frequently committed the most brutal atrocities. Thus we were all of us rather glad when the time came for us to be expelled... As was the fate of all German expellees, we were sent out of Silesia in cattle-trucks. The Poles searched us, or to be more correct robbed us, most thoroughly twice before they let us depart...

The chapel at the castle, belonging to Count Saurma's family, in Laskowitz was not damaged as far as the exterior was concerned. The Protestant church, too, had not been damaged. The chapel had, however, been ransacked, and even the pews and the fixtures in the vestry had been stolen... The castle had not been damaged at all, and was at first used as a Russian field-hospital and later as the headquarters of the Russian commanding officer.

The chapel of ease in Zindel was hit by a small shell which only caused slight damage to the roof. All the windows, however, were smashed. The chapel, like the parish-church, had also been raided by marauders who had wrought havoc. All the vestments, sacred vessels and linen, carpets, and chalices, etc., had been stolen. All the necessary vessels and linen for the first service had to be hired. The steel tabernacle had also been dragged off the altar and damaged. After the chapel had once more been set in order services were held once a fortnight, usually in the afternoon. The Poles had the windows repaired with wood before the winter set in. Incidentally, only a few Catholic families had returned to Zindel.

The Germans were subjected to so many hardships, as a result of the terrorist measures enforced by the Poles, that most of them chose to leave the parish of their own accord before they were actually expelled.

As the territory on the right side of the Oder had been surrendered to the Russians without any fighting, most of the buildings had not been damaged very much. It was not until after the capitulation, namely at Whitsuntide, that a number of houses and farms in Meleschwitz, Zindel, and Laskowitz, were wilfully destroyed by Russians who set fire to them...

The inhabitants of Jeltsch and Laskowitz were expelled during Whit week, whilst the inhabitants of the villages belonging to the district of Breslau, namely Meleschwitz, Zindel, and Lengefeld, were expelled four weeks later, on July 12th, 1946. On July 21st, 1946, we arrived in the Rhineland and were sent to refugee camps in the villages of Grafrath, Dormagen, Zons, Norf, and Niesenheim, in the district of Grevenbroich. By Christmas we had all obtained some kind of accommodation in private houses.

Report No. 129

The Parish of Jungfernsee, near Breslau¹⁸¹

The curacy of Jungfernsee included 1,020 Catholics (1942) and 57 persons of other denominations (1929). The church (The Sacred Heart of Jesus) was built in 1923 and 1924. Jungfernsee, which had formerly belonged to the parish of Margareth, became an independent curacy on July 17, 1923.

... On Tuesday evening, January 23rd, 1945, the inhabitants of Jungfernsee received orders to evacuate the village, and a trek sorrowfully set out for Gobelnitz. The trek included most of the villagers — young and old, the strong, the feeble, and the sick, and none of them knew what fate held in store for them. Only a few persons remained behind in the village. I was one of them. I could not bear the thought of leaving the church and those who had remained behind! — Imagine my surprise when, two hours later, the rest of the villagers returned. They had received orders from the Party district leader to return to Jungfernsee as there was no danger. Next morning — that is to say on the Wednesday — I heard confession and celebrated mass at the usual hour. The service was almost over when we suddenly heard the fire-horn, the signal to leave the village immediately. Once again I decided to stay. During the rest of the day I heard confession, absolved several penitents, including some soldiers, and administered the sacrament to two persons who were ill and tried to comfort them. That same day Russian units in Grossbrueck shelled the village...

On Thursday, January 25th, I celebrated mass, visited my little flock, and then went back to the church and read my breviary in front of St. Mary's altar. Suddenly a shell crashed through the roof into the church, filling the interior with smoke and splinters. Fortunately, I was not injured, but it was a warning to me to seek shelter elsewhere, especially as all the windows in the church were broken.

¹⁸¹ s. *Beitraege*, Vol III, p 178 ff

I wrapped up a rochet, two stoles, and the small ritual, and, despite the fact that no one was supposed to be out on the streets, I went along to five of my oldest parishioners who had remained behind and absolved them and said goodbye to them. Then I said goodbye to the church which was so dear to me, and set out to seek the rest of my parishioners. — But the way was long and tedious and I was often forced to rest. — From Jungfernsee I proceeded to Grebelwitz. On the way an ambulance gave me a lift. From there I proceeded to Kattern, and once again I was lucky enough to get a lift on a lorry for part of the way. It was a Divine Providence that protected me on my journey. When I reached Kattern I found that it had been evacuated some days previously and that the only persons who had remained behind were the priest, a few of the inhabitants, and the Grey Sisters. They welcomed me most kindly and gave me accommodation. Next morning, just after we had celebrated mass, we were told that the Russians were coming. We went into the cellar to shelter and stayed there for several hours. — On the Friday I also met two of the villagers from Jungfernsee, who had likewise fled at the last moment, and I was very pleased to be able to get accommodation for them at the convent of the Grey Sisters. Whilst I was in Kattern I sent a postcard to the archiepiscopal vicariate-general in Breslau on February 1st, 1945, worded as follows: "I beg to inform the Archiepiscopal Vicariate-General that I remained in my parish of Jungfernsee until a shell hit the church, shortly before the Russians seized the village. My parishioners left previously, but I do not know where their trek was making for. I am at present staying in Kattern where the parish-priest has also remained behind." — As already mentioned, there was a convent belonging to the Sisters of the Good Shepherd near Kattern, and when the rest of the inhabitants left Kattern the nuns decided to remain behind. As they had no priest the Reverend Father in Kattern asked me to take charge of this office, which I did. I celebrated mass with them for the first time on Sunday, February 3rd, and they all took Holy Communion...

Early on the Wednesday morning, a Russian patrol appeared and searched the convent. As they were leaving, one of the soldiers fired a shot through the window of the room I happened to be in. The bullet whizzed past me and lodged in the door which was only about one and a half feet away from me. But my hour had apparently not yet come. — The days and nights that followed were a veritable inferno. And the Russians behaved like fiends, beating, molesting, and even raping the inhabitants. One or two of them, however, were more humane. On one occasion, when one of these brutes knocked my spectacles off my nose and smashed them, a Russian officer came and offered me another pair. — And so the days passed! On the Friday morning a Russian lieutenant came and told me to go along to the headquarters of the Russian commandant with him in order to get a permit for the inmates of the convent to leave. I later learnt that whilst I had been on the way to Grebelwitz the nuns received orders to get ready and be prepared to leave

within half an hour's time without waiting for me to return. By the time I returned, the nuns had left the convent, and I was told that they had gone to Kattern. — So I went to Kattern as quickly as I could. When I got there I found that the church had been destroyed by fire and the vicarage occupied by the Russians. There was no trace of either the priest or the nuns. I then went along to St. Katherine's Convent, which belonged to the Grey Sisters. The Russians told me to go into one of the cellars. It was pitchdark, and when I called out and asked whether there was anyone else in the cellar, someone replied, "Be quiet, don't mention any names!" We were in the cellar for five days, until the Wednesday, without a break except for the two occasions when I celebrated mass and heard confession in the ruined church. At night it was as though hell had been let loose, and the Russians committed the most dreadful atrocities, which I do not care to describe. Eventually all the younger persons, those between twenty and thirty years of age, decided to leave Kattern, even at the risk of meeting with worse experiences elsewhere. Some of the Russians who were kindly disposed towards the Germans had told us that we should have no difficulty in getting back to the districts which had already been occupied, and so I, too, decided to leave Kattern and return to Jungfernsee...

I reached the village. A dreadful sight met my eyes, — most of the houses had been shelled and damaged, cattle, calves, pigs, goats, and tame rabbits were running about wild. I met one of my parishioners, an old man, near to his house and asked him to give me a drink of water. He gave me a cup of coffee and then I proceeded into the village. I did not meet a soul on my way to the church. When I got there, I was greatly grieved to see the chaos and destruction which had been wrought. There was a huge hole in the roof over the sanctuary through which the rain had poured down onto the high altar. There was also a huge hole, caused by a shell, in the slanting roof of the nave, between the organ and St. Joseph's altar. The roof of the vicarage, too, had been badly damaged and most of the windows had been smashed. I now went in search of my little flock and finally found two of my women-parishioners in a stable, where they had hidden in their fear and terror. They were very happy to see me and to know that here at last was someone who shared their troubles... The vestry, in particular, was ransacked again and again. The vestments were removed from the cupboards, thrown onto the floor, trampled on and soiled. It was a diabolical trick to prevent me from celebrating mass... — I spent most of the time either in the stables, the church or the vicarage, and lived in constant fear and trembling of what would happen next. One day — it was on March 24th, 1945, — the Russian commanding officer in Kraftborn came and told me that I could move into the vicarage again permanently. So I moved in and settled down again at the vicarage with the two old women who acted as my housekeepers. But we were only allowed to remain there in peace for two or three days, however, and then the Russians started tormenting us. We were continually being molested. Every day whole gangs of Russians — not soldiers, but workers — would come and search the house and

steal whatever took their fancy. We lived in constant fear and terror and hardly ventured to go to sleep at night. Very often we were obliged to flee in order to avoid being killed. On Wednesday, March 28th, 1945, things were particularly bad. Four drunken Russians raided the vicarage and thrashed the three of us, belabouring our heads and backs with blows. It was only by resorting to cunning that we managed to escape an even worse fate. On one occasion, during Passion Week, a drunken Russian knocked me down and seriously injured my lower lip by treading on it with his boots.

It grieved me deeply to see how Jungfernsee had changed. It had once been a lovely village, but now the trim little houses had a dilapidated and untidy appearance. Words fail to describe the havoc that had been wrought. For months on end Russian pickets and groups of soldiers raided the houses in the village and stole all they could find, including clothes and machines. Not a day passed without our being molested.

The worst night we experienced was on April 10th, 1945. At about midnight Russian soldiers raided the house and until about one o'clock we were completely at their mercy. So far they had treated the women-folk with a certain degree of respect, but now cases of rape occurred frequently. The women were terrified to death every time the Russians entered a house. All kinds of tricks were devised in order to prevent the Russians from getting hold of the womenfolk. During the days that followed, these rogues stole anything they set eyes on, ranging from bread to alarm-clocks and blankets.

... On July 24th, 1945, the first lot of Poles appeared in Jungfernsee and another period of suffering began for the inhabitants of the village. At first, eighteen Polish families settled in Jungfernsee, but they were soon followed by a further fifty-eight or more. It was not long before they began to lord it over the Germans. They stole the last of our possessions and even turned the villagers out of their homes. Those of the villagers who, with considerable difficulty, had managed to obtain a few horses or cows again were now deprived of these by the Poles, and were thus unable to plough and till the fields. As a result of the shortage of food, especially fats and meat, all kinds of diseases broke out and the death-rate increased alarmingly. There were as many as fifteen deaths in the village from June to the beginning of August, 1945, and a large number of persons lay at death's door. It was, of course, inevitable that hunger-typhus should break out...

One fine day, orders were issued to the effect that the Germans must leave Silesia, their native country... As I addressed the members of my congregation for the last time, they wept and sobbed, and I, too, was moved to tears and was unable to continue speaking. July 10th, 1946, was the memorable day on which the first trek of expellees left the village. — The parish-priest of Jungfernsee was expelled on May 17th, 1947, and left with the fifth trek. The Polish authorities in Breslau who "checked" the expellees actually robbed him of a soutane, biretta, stole, and a ritual, as well as various other possessions...

*Report No. 130***The Parish of Kanth, near Breslau¹⁸²**

The parish of Kanth included 2,300 Catholics (1942) and 1,706 persons of other denominations (1929). A church (St Peter's and St Paul's) is mentioned in historical records in 1302. The present church dates from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. From 1474 to 1810 there was a resident bishop in Kanth and the town was the centre of the see of the same name.

On the morning of February 9th, 1945, the Russians occupied our town. They began looting all the shops, throwing the goods, including foodstuffs, out onto the street, and smashing all the windows. Russian soldiers searched the houses for German soldiers, alcohol, and women. They made us cook for them and stayed in our houses for hours on end. Most of them were drunk, of course, but so far they neither molested us nor stole anything. On Sunday, February 10th, mass was celebrated in our church for the last time. In a brief sermon Archpresbyter Dr. Moepert said that we must thank the Lord for having protected us during the occupation of the town, which fortunately had not cost any lives, and added that we might now hope that the worst was over. At that time none of us foresaw the dreadful weeks in store for us.

More and more troops arrived in the town and it was as though hell had been let loose. On February 12th, 1945, the Russians turned us out of the house and now used it as military quarters. We spent the night in the cellar at the hospital, but we did not feel safe there as the Russians raided every kind of building; next morning we fled to Mr. Sch.'s in the hopes that we should be safer there, as his house was a big one. A number of families in the town, including Archpresbyter Dr. Moepert and the members of his household, were already sheltering at Mr. Sch.'s when we got there. The vicarage had been looted, and Dr. Moepert had been robbed of all his clothes and only possessed what he was wearing. We also learnt that Mr. Bernert (the owner of the dairy) and a Mr. Tecke and his son had been shot by the Russians. The situation was becoming more and more serious. Archpresbyter Dr. Moepert then absolved us all, for none of us knew how long we were likely to be alive. It is impossible to describe the fear and terror we suffered whilst at Mr. Sch.'s. Help was refused us and we were told that the enemy could do as he liked, since Kanth was part of the fighting zone. Russian soldiers raided the house continually, both during the day and at night. They robbed us of the suitcases containing our belongings; they dragged the women and girls into the cellars and attics, and raped them. Many of those who were raped begged the Russians to shoot them so as to escape further tortures of this kind. The Russians set fire to the attics and the cellars, and we fully expected to be burnt alive as they locked us up in the other rooms of the house, but the Lord protected us. Next evening they pushed about fifty of us into a corner in one of the rooms, so that we could barely stand, and then threatened to shoot us. In the

¹⁸² s. *Beitrag*, Vol II, p 172 ff.

meantime some of them threw all our belongings which were in the other rooms onto a heap on the floor. As there was no light it was quite impossible for us to gather our belongings together again afterwards. That was one of the worst nights we experienced. Next morning, after eight days and nights of indescribable fear and terror, we managed to flee from the house. That same morning we learnt that Archpresbyter Dr. Moe-pert had been shot by the Russians.¹⁸³

The nuns, too, had some dreadful experiences, and even the Mother Superior was raped by the Russians. For a short time the nuns discarded their robes and donned ordinary clothes and hid in private houses in the town. Sister I. spent a night among the ruins of the hospital, which had been destroyed by fire, so as not to be molested by the Russians. — After leaving Mr. Sch.'s we went to Mr. E.'s house, and here twenty of us spent ten days cooped up in a tiny room. But things were no better there, either. Whilst we were at Mr. E.'s the Russians molested us, both by day and at night, and raped the womenfolk. And practically every night they set fire to houses in the town...

On April 2nd, 1945, we ventured to return to Kanth. The Russians had meanwhile wrought complete havoc in our houses. They had broken open the tabernacle in the church and had torn away the wainscoting on the altars. The Sanctuary Lamp was lying on the floor; the organ had been damaged, all the sacred linen had been stolen, and most of the vestments could no longer be used. The room in which the vestments had been stored had been stripped. The Russians had thrown all the contents out of the window and destroyed them. They had broken open the safe at the vicarage in which the monstrance and the chalices had been stored and had stolen the sacred vessels. The church was in a filthy state. — Whilst we were in Kriebowitz the Russians continued to commit atrocities in the town. They even raped schoolgirls and women of over sixty. Two girls died as a result of being raped, and many of the women contracted diseases. Most of the women hid in barns and hay-lofts for days on end. During the night women could be heard screaming for help. Some of them even spent the night in the cemetery to avoid being molested by the Russians... Women were frequently taken away by the Russians, allegedly in order to work for them; they were then raped or else abducted for days or weeks. Mr. H. of Beilau and the two Mr. Guettlers of Polsnitz were also abducted and taken to Siberia, where they died. A relative of Mrs. B., a young girl of eighteen, and Mrs. B.'s brother were abducted and have so far not returned...

We were given permission to clean and tidy up the church and hold services there again. Many of the parishioners volunteered to help in this task and did their share in clearing away all the dirt and rubbish and restoring the sacred appearance of the interior. On Whit Sunday the church was re-opened and dedicated, and we held our first service.

¹⁸³ For details of the death of the parish-priest of Kanth, who was killed whilst trying to go to the rescue of the nuns, see *The Martyrdom of Silesian Priests 1945/46*, pp 68, 69

We celebrated the Feast of Corpus Christi in church, as conditions were still too turbulent for us to hold our usual procession through the town. A Russian officer who was living at the vicarage kindly gave us back one of the monstrances. Whilst cleaning the church we found several chalices and patens under the filth and rubble...

A typhus epidemic broke out and claimed countless victims in Kanth and the surrounding districts. In fact, it was rumoured that there were about three thousand cases. The former orphanage was converted into a hospital and two German doctors, a man and a woman, were in charge. The doctor later died of typhus. Practically no coffins at all were available. The dead were wrapped in sheets or paper, taken to the cemetery, and buried together in one huge grave. Very often the relatives of the dead had to dig the graves themselves and take the bodies to the cemetery themselves. The graves were closed as quickly as possible, and every evening a memorial service was held in church for those who had died that day. Father Rothkegel of Reichbergen also died of typhus. The epidemic lasted from June until September.

We were obliged to endure new hardships when the Poles began to settle in Kanth. On August 1st, 1945, they took over the municipal administration. Looting began anew and the Germans were turned out of their homes.

We suffered a great deal under Polish administration until we were finally expelled from Kanth. On July 22nd, 1946, we had to line up in the courtyard of the castle for the purpose of being searched and checked by the Poles prior to our leaving Kanth. Many of us were deprived of the last of our belongings on this occasion. Then we were marched to the station, where they put us on a train.

Report No. 131

The Parish of Martinsgrund (Sachwitz), near Breslau¹⁸⁴

The parish of Martinsgrund included 758 Catholics (1942) and 1,392 persons of other denominations (1929). The church (The Assumption of the Virgin Mary) is mentioned in historical records in 1217. The present church was built at the beginning of the sixteenth century, the bell-tower in 1891.

February 16th, 1945: Sachwitz was shelled by the Russians. The vicarage, the barn belonging to the vicarage, and the house next-door, belonging to Albert K., were hit by shells. Otherwise there was not much damage in the village. The church was not damaged. The Consecrated Host was removed from the church as a safety measure.

At ten o'clock at night the first lot of Russians appeared at the vicarage. They searched the house for German soldiers, demanded alcohol and food, stole our watches, and then departed.

February 17th, 1945: The vicarage was full of Russians. In the evening they turned us out of the house. The same thing happened at

¹⁸⁴ s. *Beiträge*, Vol II, p 201 ff

most of the houses in the village. We managed to find shelter at the convent where the nuns had already taken in two hundred persons. There were twenty-four of us in the tiny room belonging to the janitor. Most of the other people were given accommodation in the nursery school. Some of the men were abducted and taken to Russia. During the days and weeks that followed, cases of looting, raping of women and girls, maltreatment, and murder occurred. A girl was murdered and her body was found two months later in a field, covered with earth. Her hands and feet had been tied together with wire and a gag had been thrust into her mouth. A married couple (Max Herrmann and his wife) was also murdered. The sister of the girl who was murdered committed suicide. One woman jumped out of a window and died six days later. Every night, women who were being molested by the Russians could be heard screaming for help.

Soon after they seized the village the Russians wrought havoc inside the church and desecrated it in a most disgusting manner. They fired at the tabernacle (fortunately, it was empty); they smashed all the windows, knocked down the statues, damaged and soiled the pictures, ruined the organ, and removed many of the pews.

We had hoped that the Russians would only remain in the village for two weeks at the most and would then move on. Unfortunately, however, owing to the resistance put up by the German troops in Breslau and at the Zobten, the Russians remained in Sachwitz and the surrounding districts for three months.

On Maundy Thursday all the inhabitants were turned out of the village. A few of them were forced to remain behind and the Russians made them dig trenches. We trekked to Malsen, near Breslau.

On the Wednesday of Easter-week we were turned out of Malsen, and trekked to Sadewitz, near Kanth. On the way some of the men were arrested by the Russians and taken to headquarters. Many of them were forced to work for the Russians. A number of them were taken to Russia.

In Gross-Schottgau I saw some Russians force open one of the vaults in the cemetery...

On May 17th, 1945, we all returned to Sachwitz. After the church had been cleaned and tidied up, services were once more held there regularly, on Sundays and during the week. Strange to say, one of the chalices, the beautiful silver monstrance (without the lunula), the silver wine-jugs, and the plates had not been stolen, but all the vestments and most of the sacred linen were missing. The priest was obliged to borrow some vestments from the nuns.

The vicarage had been stripped of practically all the fittings and furniture, with the exception of a few pieces of furniture which were damaged. All clothes and linen had been stolen.

Practically all the parochial records had been destroyed. Most of the archipresbyterial records lay scattered about in the churchyard and on a dunghill nearby. They were damaged and dirty. The church registers,

with the exception of two which had been started shortly before the Russian invasion, were all available...

At the end of May, 1945, the first lot of Poles arrived in the village and the inhabitants were once again turned out of their homes...

The Poles could be divided into two categories. Some of them were kind, pious, and ready to help the Germans whenever they could. Others, the Communists and those who had been treated badly by Germans, hated the Germans. This latter type did all the looting. One night they even raided and looted the vicarage. The decent Poles were continually telling us that they would much prefer to return to their own country rather than remain in Sachwitz.

On June 28th, 1945, all the Germans (with the exception of the parish-priest, the nuns, and some persons who were ill) were turned out of the village. They set out for Liegnitz. The weather was very bad, and shortly before reaching Liegnitz they were molested by Russians, who forced them to turn back. Completely exhausted and miserable they arrived back in Sachwitz, only to discover that their homes had been ransacked and looted in the meantime.

In May and June a typhus epidemic broke out in Sachwitz, and people also began to suffer from another very painful and chronic disease, namely ulcers. That year 113 deaths (including Protestants) occurred, most of them due to typhus or the after-effects of this disease...

On July 21st, 1946, the Germans were expelled from Sachwitz. Many of the expellees were deprived of their money, bedding, clothes, and linen, etc., when the Polish authorities in Kanth checked and searched them.

There were about 1,500 expellees from seventeen villages, including four priests, — the parish-priests of Sachwitz, Tinz, Altenrode, and Konradserbe. The expellees were forced to leave the country in cattle-trucks. On July 26th, they reached Marienthal, where they were registered, deloused, and, for the first time on their journey, given some food. They continued their journey to Peine, in the province of Hanover, the same day. On reaching Peine they were assigned to various camps. Most of the inhabitants of Sachwitz have remained in Peine and the surrounding districts...

Report No. 132

The Parish of Nipperrn, near Breslau ¹⁸⁵

The parish of Nipperrn included 1,359 Catholics (1942) and 1,616 persons of other denominations (1929). A church (St Mary's) is mentioned in historical records in 1353. The present church was built in 1686. Until 1810 Nipperrn belonged to St Clare's Convent in Breslau.

A letter, dated September 30th, 1945

"I am writing this letter from Silesia which has become a veritable prison. We have been completely cut off from the rest of the world since the middle of February, 1945, and are at the mercy of those who

have occupied our country. We are constantly being robbed, our women-folk are raped and shot. Gangs of juvenile marauders are continually raiding the towns and villages and we are powerless to defend ourselves. They simply steal whatever takes their fancy. We are practically starving, and I dread to think of the coming winter, with no food, no warm clothes, and no fuel. The barns and the cellars are empty. We have been robbed of all our cattle. The fields are full of weeds. We are now being deprived of the potatoes we managed to plant in the spring, and they are being used to distil spirits. We cannot till the fields as we no longer possess any draught-horses or oxen, agricultural machines or seeds. In a few weeks' time Silesia will resemble a huge cemetery. For the past few weeks the Russians have been forcing Poles to settle here. It will not be long before the Poles suffer the same fate that has befallen us. As yet, they still have our small food supplies to live on. Most of the people here are despondent and weary of life, which is not surprising after the nervous strain they have endured during the past months. For weeks on end hordes of soldiers raided our houses at all hours of the day, robbed us, beat us, and raped the womenfolk. Some of the women were raped about three hundred times. Neither young girls of twelve nor old women of eighty were spared. Many of the women are now suffering from venereal disease and cannot get medical treatment as none is available.

Our lives can only be saved if help is forthcoming as soon as possible and if drastic measures are enforced to put a stop to marauding, and to help us to get back our agricultural machines and thus enable us to till the land. The fields, which a year ago were so fertile, are now a desolate waste of weeds. Even the Poles who have been forced to settle here have no seeds, no cattle, and no machines to till the land. They are as powerless as we are to ward off the cruel fate which is likely to befall us..."

Report No. 132a

The Parish of Tinz, near Breslau¹⁸⁶

The parish of Tinz included 450 Catholics (1942) and 828 persons of other denominations (1929). A church (The Assumption of the Virgin Mary) is mentioned in historical records in 1353. The present church was probably built in 1560. Certain additions were made in 1593, and it was renovated in 1856.

... During the afternoon of January 13th, 1945, the priest and I discovered that the church was full of Russian soldiers. One of them was making a dreadful din on the harmonium whilst the others wrought havoc in the pews. The vestry had been looted and all the vestments and linen stored there had been torn to bits and scattered about the church. The altar was even barer than it is on Good Friday!...

¹⁸⁶ s *Beitraege*, Vol II, p 209 ff

... Some Russian soldiers seized hold of one of the girls at my inn and took her into the dining-room, where she was then raped by three officers. The kitchen staff was continually being molested, and the only way we managed to defend ourselves against these barbarians was by saying the Rosary...

... All that day Russians threatened me with their revolvers again and again. Unfortunately, my housemaid, instead of staying with us, decided to hide. The Russians found her and, after raping her, dragged her off to the next village. They locked her up in a house there, and she is said to have starved to death. Fifteen women of Klettendorf¹⁸⁷ are said to have been abducted that same day and taken to Siberia...

... Russian soldiers were constantly coming and going all day long. In fact, we never had a moment's peace. In the evening they would return, somewhat the worse for drink, and molest us. If we refused to comply with their requests they threatened us with their revolvers, and on several occasions we were obliged to flee from the house. On one occasion we were even forced to seek shelter in a hut in the forest. One evening I was very nearly done for. A Russian lieutenant, who was drunk, kicked me in the knees because I refused to "sleep" with him. Then he grabbed hold of a mincing-machine, which happened to be lying on the table, and was just about to hit me on the head with it when the door opened and a captain entered. The latter ordered him to leave the room, and then gave us a dish of food and told us not to worry, — he would see to it that we were not molested during the night. He kept his word, and the drunken lieutenant did not show up again...

Report No. 133

The Parish of Zobten on the Hill, near Breslau¹⁸⁸

The parish of Zobten on the Hill included 2,364 Catholics (1942) and 3,001 persons of other denominations (1929). A church (St Jacob's), which probably already existed about the middle of the twelfth century, is mentioned in historical records in 1250. The present church was built about 1400, but after being destroyed by fire, was rebuilt in the baroque style in 1744. The tower, as it stands today, was built in 1858. Until 1810 Zobten belonged to the Augustinian prebendaries in Breslau — The pilgrims' chapel (St Anna's) was built about 1500. The vaulting was renovated in 1712.

Both the churches in Zobten on the Hill, — the parish-church and St Anna's Church, were so badly damaged that they could not be used... St. Anna's Church had been hit by several shells... At first we held the services at our house until Mr. P.B. and some volunteers managed to repair some of the damage in St. Anna's Church. No one

¹⁸⁷ Part of the neighbouring parish of Herzogshufen

¹⁸⁸ s. *Beitraege*. Vol III, pp 453-454, 470-471

was very keen to help with the task of clearing away all the rubble, but after the priest had removed several hundred cartfuls himself, a number of other persons volunteered to help. A makeshift altar was set up (the presbytery had been damaged so badly that it could not be used at all), and we were able to hold our first service in the church on the Feast of Corpus Christi. The only trouble was that in bad weather the rain poured in through the holes in the roof. It was not until some time later that we managed to get the roof repaired. The image of St. Anna, which we had managed to retrieve out of the rubble, stood in my drawing-room for several weeks, and every night I used to pray to St. Anna to protect our house and Zobten...

As we came out of church on the day before the Feast of St. Peter and St. Paul a militiaman stepped up to us and ordered us to appear on the market square in an hour's time. We were informed that we could only bring a few belongings with us. On hearing this, the people were seized with terror and despair. It was dreadful. I immediately gave orders that small suitcases were to be packed for the children, and then we hurriedly gathered together some food supplies to take with us. I knelt down in front of the image of St. Anna and prayed to the Holy Mother and to St. Anna to show me God's Will. Suddenly, I felt a strange calm come over me, and I decided to remain in the house on my own responsibility. I locked all the doors, and then we all knelt down and said the Rosary together. — We, the children and I, were firmly determined to remain in the house and risk being shot rather than trek along the roads, not knowing what kind of a fate might befall us.

In the meantime dreadful scenes were enacted in the streets of Zobten. Polish militiamen on horseback drove the poor people through the streets, lashing them with whips. The entire population of Zobten lined up on the square in front of the townhall. They were all clutching small bundles containing their belongings. Women and children were weeping and screaming. The menfolk wore an expression of utter despair on their faces. Every now and again the Poles cracked their whips and brutally lashed the poor people standing on the square. The latter were obliged to wait about from four o'clock in the afternoon until eight-thirty in the evening. There were about 1,500 of them. The Poles then finally drove them out of the town, swearing and shouting at them...

... Personally, I cannot understand why the Poles have behaved in such an abominable manner towards the Germans, nor can I reconcile their conduct in any way with our Catholic faith. In our religious instruction we are always taught by our priests and our parents that a Catholic cannot, on the one hand, constantly commit evil crimes such as the Poles have committed in Silesia and, on the other hand, go to church and attend mass. Before I was arrested I often saw Poles, and in particular militiamen and also the commanding officer of the militia, in church before we had a Polish priest in Zobten. During the procession on the Feast of Corpus Christi, for instance, the Polish wheel-

wright, who was one of the biggest rogues in Zobten, walked under the canopy and supported the Polish priest who was bearing the Consecrated Host. The Polish mayor, who was equally well-known as a thief and a tyrant, walked on the other side of the priest. I fail to understand how these fiends come to be Catholics and why they should be under the care of the Holy Father in Rome. To make matters worse, they even espouse the cause of Communism. What must the non-Catholics think of all this! Various German Communists also behaved in the same manner as the Poles towards some of the inhabitants of Zobten. Many of the inhabitants were betrayed by Communists and were then put into prison, beaten and robbed. The Communists wore a red band on their left sleeve, and some of them were entrusted with the task of supervising the gangs of Germans who were forced to work for the Poles. They received much larger food rations and enjoyed the privilege of being able to buy things much more cheaply. After a couple of weeks some of them discarded their red bands and refused to co-operate with the Poles. Others stuck it a bit longer, but the Poles eventually deprived them of all their possessions just as they had done the rest of the inhabitants...

Report No. 134

The Parish of Zobten-Gorkau, near Breslau¹⁸⁹

The parish of Zobten-Gorkau included 2,500 Catholics (1942) and 984 persons of other denominations (1929). A church (The Assumption of the Virgin Mary), founded by the Augustinian prebendaries, was dedicated in 1110. The present church was built during the years 1553 to 1558. Until 1810 Gorkau belonged to the abbey of the Augustinian prebendaries in Breslau. The chapel (The Visitation of Our Lady) on Zobten Hill was built in 1702. It was destroyed by fire in 1834, but was rebuilt in 1852.

... We were in Koepprich, near Neurode, when Silesia capitulated. As various S.S. units continued fighting after May 6th, 1945, the Russians did not actually occupy Koepprich until May 10th, which happened to be the Feast of Corpus Christi. We hardly felt inclined to welcome the Russians as our liberators, for as soon as they arrived they began to commit all kinds of atrocities. They raped the women, and robbed and arrested persons. The Poles, too, participated in these atrocities. Our sole desire was to return to Gorkau as soon as possible. We left Koepprich, that is to say the collecting point at Volpeisdorf, on May 11th... In Langenbielau, Reichenbach, and various other places that we passed through in the course of our trek, we witnessed dreadful scenes as the Russians, Poles, and Jews wreaked their vengeance on the Germans. Though I must admit that I met some Catholic Jews from Hungary, who had been interned in a concentration camp near Langen-

¹⁸⁹ s. *Beitraege*, Vol III, p. 481 ff.

bielau, who were extremely kind and decent... I managed to borrow a bicycle soon after we had passed through Reichenbach, and cycled the rest of the way to Gorkau. When I caught sight of Zobten Hill and the chapel there, I stopped and thanked God for all His Mercy. My heart was filled with gratitude at the thought that I had reached home once more... I was very glad to see that the church and the vicarage had not suffered any damage during our absence. Only a few of the houses in Gorkau, Stroebel, Qualkau, and Kleinbielau had been damaged. In Marxdorf, however, four-fifths of the houses had been demolished...

... On the evening of May 11th, 1945, the first lot of families arrived back in Gorkau and Stroebel. We were all so happy to be back home again and viewed the future quite optimistically. Optimism, however, gave place to fear after our terrifying experiences the first night we were back in Gorkau, and it was a fear that remained with us for the rest of the time we spent in Gorkau until we were expelled. The sufferings and hardships endured by the people of Gorkau during the months that followed can be compared to those endured by the inmates of concentration camps. Although there were at first only about two dozen Russians in the villages belonging to our parish, they promptly began looting houses and molesting German women and girls. By degrees more and more inhabitants began to return home... On Sunday, May 13th, the people of Marxdorf returned. Owing to the fact that a bridge nearby had been blown up, they were not able to return to their ruined village by the main road, but had to proceed along bypaths. A lot of mines had been laid there, and two young girls of fifteen and sixteen were the first victims... A few weeks later two young men were torn to bits when a mine exploded. Several other persons were seriously injured. Some of the inhabitants of Qualkau and Kleinbielau had fled to places only a few miles away and they, too, soon returned home again. The majority of the inhabitants, however, had been evacuated to Czechoslovakia and did not return until about four weeks after the capitulation. They had been treated very badly by the Czechs and had been imprisoned, robbed, and beaten, and forced to endure all kinds of hardships.

It is difficult for me to give a chronological account of all the dreadful incidents which occurred during these turbulent times. What was truly amazing was the eagerness with which the Germans set about cleaning up their houses and tilling the fields, despite the fact that Russian and Polish marauders were constantly raiding the villages. There were hardly any horses or cows left... Most of the cattle was seized by the Russians. Every day thousands of Russians passed through our district and proceeded eastwards to take part in the war against Japan which was still in progress. Discipline among the Russian troops was so slack that whole gangs of soldiers simply detached themselves from their units and raided the countryside for weeks on end, until they were finally caught by other Russian troops. Large herds of cattle that had been stolen were driven along the main road from Schweidnitz to Breslau, and there was a constant stream of traffic, consisting mainly of lorries bearing stolen

furniture, pianos, and beds, etc., on this road for months. Sometimes there were German prisoners-of-war among the Russian troops that passed through the villages. Whenever Russian soldiers passed through the villages the young women and girls were obliged to hide so as not to be molested.

... In addition to the hardships inflicted on them by the Poles and the Russians, the Germans were also faced with the problem of famine and disease. At first, that is to say before the Poles arrived in the villages, adequate supplies of potatoes and grain had still been available. The Poles, however, impounded all the grain and used it to distil huge quantities of spirits for their apparently unquenchable thirst. Incidentally, most of the atrocities which occurred were committed by the Poles and Russians when they were drunk. The Germans were robbed of all their cattle, their poultry, and their rabbits. For a time the Germans lived on wild vegetables, ears of corn, rape-seed, and potatoes they managed to glean. A few days before Christmas, 1945, one of the horses belonging to the Russians died. After they had buried it, the Germans exhumed it and consumed it for their Christmas dinner. Typhus broke out as a result of the famine. By the end of 1945 about a hundred persons had died either of typhus or consumption in Gorkau, Strehlitz, and Guhlau. As there were no coffins available many of the dead were wrapped in paper and interred without coffins. The dire need of the German population failed to make any impression whatsoever on the Poles. On the contrary, they even raided and looted German houses in which there was someone at death's door and, regardless of this fact, turned the occupants out. In the midst of all this distress we were subjected to further terrorization when, in July, 1946, Polish soldiers appeared in our villages and expelled the entire German population from their native country.

SECTION V

Events in Lower Silesia¹⁹⁰

- 1) Glogau
- 2) Freystadt
- 3) Zuellichau-Schwiebus
- 4) Gruenberg
- 5) Sprottau
- 6) Lueben
- 7) Bunzlau
- 8) Lauban
- 9) Goerlitz
- 10) Liegnitz
- 11) Goldberg
- 12) Jauer
- 13) Loewenberg
- 14) Schoenau an der Katzbach
- 15) Hirschberg
- 16) Landeshut

*Report No. 135*The Parish of Glogau¹⁹¹

The town of Glogau, capital of the district of Glogau, comprised the cathedral parish and the town parish which together included 9,888 Catholics (1942) and 22,026 persons of other denominations (1929). A collegiate monastery (The Annunciation of the Virgin Mary) was founded about 1200. It is mentioned in historical records in 1218. In 1810 it was secularized. — The present cathedral was built during the years 1413 to 1466. The archdeaconry was associated with the cathedral, a connection which dated from olden times, namely from the thirteenth century, when there was an important Institution of Archdeacons in Breslau, Oppeln, Liegnitz, and Glogau. This Institution continued to exist until the secularization. — The parish-church of the town (St Nicholas?) is mentioned in historical records in 1219. Parts of the present church were probably built prior to 1350. The choir dates from the end of the fourteenth century and the cross-vaulting from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. — There was a Jesuit college in Glogau from 1626 until 1801, when it became a Catholic grammar-school. — The monastery and church of the Redemptorists (Clemens M Hofbauer) were built in 1928.

¹⁹⁰ The following reports have been compiled in keeping with the chronological order of events

¹⁹¹ s. *Beitraege*, Vol III, p. 232 ff. — The last German provost of Glogau Cathedral, Ecclesiastical Counsellor Heinrich Werner (born February 1, 1881, and ordained June 23, 1906), died on December 8, 1950, in Viersen/Rhineland. — Cf. also M Hilgner, *Der Dom zu Glogau Seine Geschichte und seine Kunstdenkmale*. Glogau, 1912.

End of January, 1945. — German troops from the Eastern front, which had for the most part been disrupted, swarmed into Glogau. Endless treks of German refugees from the territory east of the Oder passed through the town. The weather was bitterly cold and the roads were covered with snow. The streets in Glogau were jammed with crowds. A large number of old persons and children died of exposure. Their bodies were placed in ditches by the wayside. — The inhabitants of the district in the vicinity of the cathedral were evacuated. The provost was also obliged to leave his house and, together with his two sisters, sought shelter at the town vicarage on the other side of the Oder. So, too, did the archdeacon.

February. — From day to day the situation became more serious and it was extremely dangerous to hold services in St. Nicholas', the parish-church of the town. On February 12th, the enemy invested Glogau. Taking the Consecrated Host with us, we sought shelter in the cellars at the vicarage. There were eighteen of us altogether, — four priests, the members of their households, the administrative staff of the charity society, and the verger and his family. There were three cellars, two of which were converted into separate kitchens and storerooms for the men and the women, whilst the other was turned into a temporary chapel. The tabernacle was placed in a niche on the stairs. Mass was celebrated every day in the largest cellar. On Sundays we celebrated three masses and heard confession. We also took the sacrament to the sick in private houses and in countless cellars which had been turned into field-hospitals. In the early hours of the morning we used to bury the dead in the yards and gardens. The siege lasted for seven dreadful weeks. On February 18th, the Russians began shelling the town with phosphorus ammunition which they had captured from the German troops, and this proved our destruction. The house was hit by several shells and we were forced to seek shelter in neighbouring cellars. The church and the buildings in the vicinity were badly damaged and most of them caught fire (the townhall was the first building to catch fire). At the risk of his life Chaplain Th. extinguished a fire which broke out in the rafters of St. Nicholas' Church on Maundy Thursday. — On February 13th, Father Platte was shot by German soldiers who fired through the window of his cell at the monastery.

March. — On March 13th, the entire Redemptorist monastery, with the exception of a few rooms on the ground floor and the portal of the church, was destroyed by fire. — On February 11th, the provost, at the request of the commandant of the fortress, held a special service for soldiers in the cathedral, early in the morning. Many of the soldiers took Holy Communion. It was the last service to be held in this venerable building. On February 20th, the rafters (45 feet high, an intricate structure of wooden beams which a short time previously had been given a fire-proof coating) caught fire. The conflagration spread to the organ and from there to the interior, completely destroying all the beautiful fittings and works of art. All that remained were the bare

outer walls and the shell of the tower with its golden cross, which stood out as a landmark for miles. The iron door of the vestry prevented the fire from spreading to the vestry, but it was badly damaged by shells and was later looted by the Russians. The archdeacons' residence, the former Chapel of St. Anna, and the building belonging to the vicariate were also destroyed by fire. The provost's house was not destroyed by fire, but it was damaged so badly by shells that it was quite uninhabitable. — Sufficient food supplies were available during the siege.

April. — During the night of Easter Saturday the German troops defending the fortress effected a break-through in three assault columns and left the population of Glogau in the lurch. On Easter Sunday, April 1st, the Russian forces swarmed into the town and raided all the cellars. Because of the lengthy siege (they had hoped to capture the fortress within a few days) and the heavy losses they had suffered, the Russians now wreaked their vengeance and rage on the German population and made good use of their right to loot the town for two days. We were soon rid of our watches and other valuables, as well as our hampers and suitcases containing clothes and underwear. The women and girls suffered most of all, for they were constantly being dragged off by the Russians and raped.

At my request I was allowed to go and see the Russian commanding officer on Easter Saturday, 1945. Contrary to expectation, he was very amiable, and, incidentally, always treated me in a friendly manner later on. At this first meeting he treated me with the deference due to a clergyman and gave me permission to convert one of the rooms at the barracks into a chapel and collect the things needed for this purpose, with the aid of some German helpers. — All the churches in Glogau had been demolished and could no longer be used, and the town was more or less a heap of ruins. — The Russian commanding officer gave me a written authorization in Russian which considerably facilitated matters for me. He also helped me of his own accord to obtain a fairly decent apartment, and in the course of the following week I managed to rescue some of my furniture and pictures and about two-thirds of my library from the vicarage, as well as some of the parochial files, vestments, sacred vessels and linen, and missals, etc., from the vestry, and take them to my new quarters. The most valuable things had, unfortunately, already been stolen out of the safes which had been damaged. The Madonna by Lucas Cranach had already been removed to Heinrichau for safety in 1943 and later taken from there to Bad Landeck, where unfortunately, however, it fell into the hands of the Russians in August, 1945...

June. — The subterranean safe at the Deutsche Bank in which the valuable gilt and silver plate of the cathedral (including a large monstrance in the baroque style, a vessel on which the head of St. John the Baptist was depicted, and a large altar crucifix) had been stored was discovered by the Russians, forced open with considerable difficulty, and then looted. Despite all my efforts I only managed to retrieve the church registers and various other important documents. — About the

middle of June the Russians handed over the administration of the town to the Poles. In the meantime the number of Germans in Glogau had increased to about 2,500, including 600 Catholics. At the end of June, 1,800 persons were forcibly expelled. They set off on foot, pushing hand-carts containing their belongings. Some of them, however, returned, and the number of Germans in the town, including prisoners-of-war who had been released, once more increased to 1,000. Of these, 400 were Catholics... Epidemics broke out (in particular, dysentery and typhus), which claimed many victims. In 1945 about 80 Catholics and 200 Protestants died...

December, 1945. — On December 13th, the commanding officer of the Polish militia, for no apparent reason whatsoever, confiscated the beautiful little chapel we had set up and also the vestry, and declared that all the fittings were now the property of the Polish government. He removed sixteen bottles of sacramental wine from the vestry (fortunately, he did not discover a secret store that we had, which contained the same number of bottles), and even went so far as to interfere in ministerial matters, inasmuch as he issued orders that the sermon was no longer to be delivered in German, canticles and hymns were not to be sung in German, nor confession held in German. After considerable efforts on my part and thanks to the mediation of the Polish priest, this order was revoked during the following week. The commanding officer of the Polish militia then turned my two sisters and me out of our house. Despite the fact that the weather was bitterly cold and a snowstorm was raging, we had to be out of the house within five minutes' time. Professor K. and Father Dr. M. (Ermland) were also turned out of their rooms. We managed to find temporary accommodation at the monastery, where Father B., who had meanwhile returned from the village of Friedemost, had made some of the small living-rooms habitable once more. A friend of ours, a doctor, kindly gave my sisters accommodation. We now continued to hold our services as formerly in the cellar at the monastery. From May onwards, Dr. Sch., the dentist, acted as organist, that is to say he played the harmonium at the services. Attendance was very good and there were always numerous communicants, which was very gratifying...

Report No. 136

The Parish of Glogau ¹⁹²

After the dreadful siege of Glogau, which lasted seven weeks, and the first terrible weeks of the Occupation conditions gradually became a little better for the Germans who were still in the town. The Russian commandant of Glogau did everything in his power to assist the German municipal administrative authorities to rebuild the town, which had been completely demolished. All the Germans lived at the civilian camp in

¹⁹² s *Beitraege*, Vol I, p 134.

the Hindenburg barracks. They had a canteen of their own, the food rations being partly supplied by the Russians. The Russian commandant gave the Germans permission to open a hospital, which was run by five doctors, a kindergarten, a room in which to hold Catholic services, and also a school. The latter was opened at the end of June.

From the middle of May onwards, services were held on Sundays and on Catholic feast-days. Owing to the fact that some of the inhabitants had meanwhile returned, the population now numbered 2,400 as compared to 300 when the siege ended. We had reason to hope that conditions would continue to improve, but at the end of June, 1945, the Poles took over the civilian administration, and the whole situation was changed completely at one blow. Polish militiamen had already harassed the German inhabitants previously by robbing them and subjecting them to all kinds of atrocities. On June 25th, 1945, the Poles began to expel the Germans. On June 26th, they forced about 2,000 persons to leave the Hindenburg barracks and only gave them two hours' notice. The Polish soldiers outdid each other in their brutal methods. Elderly persons in particular, who were not quick enough in gathering their belongings together, were belaboured with whips and cudgels. In many of the villages the inhabitants were only allowed fifteen minutes in which to collect their belongings and be ready to leave. The expellees' treks were in no way organized. No doctors or nurses were available. The expellees were given neither adequate accommodation for the night nor food rations. Very often the treks were forced to move at a great speed despite the fact that the weather was extremely warm. As a result many elderly persons collapsed by the wayside and died. The Polish soldiers who were supposed to act as an escort frequently robbed the expellees or else tormented them in some other manner (the expellees of the Glogau-Brosteur trek, for instance, were forced to stand out in the rain for three hours near Herrendorf before the Poles would allow them to go to their "quarters"). Pushing handcarts containing the last of their belongings, the inhabitants of Glogau were thus forced to trudge as far as the Neisse, a distance of seventy-five miles. It is not exaggerating to say that they were driven on like cattle until they reached the Neisse, where they were then checked and searched by the Poles and relieved of most of their belongings. It was on this occasion that the Poles actually robbed Father Hertsch of his small case containing the things needed for mass. On reaching Forst, the thousands of persons who had been sent there from all parts of Silesia were simply left to their own fate.

*Report No. 137***The Parish of Beuthen on the Oder, near Glogau**¹⁹³

The parish of Beuthen on the Oder included 650 Catholics (1942) and 5,742 persons of other denominations (1929). A parish-church (St Stephen's) is mentioned in historical records in 1175. In 1565 the Augustinian prebendaries in Sagan sold the provostship of Beuthen to Fabian of Schoenaich, who was a Protestant. The present parish-church (St Jerome's) was built during the second half of the sixteenth century. It was a Protestant church until 1654.

... The Russians shelled the town until the morning of February 13th, 1945. Fortunately, however, neither the parish-church nor the vicarage suffered much damage. On the morning of February 13th, the Russians seized the town. As if guided by a divine inspiration, the priest had previously placed the Consecrated Host in the steel tabernacle in the church again. And it was safest there and was not damaged, despite the fact that marauders tried to open the tabernacle. Shelling continued in various parts of the town and fires broke out. More than fifty houses were demolished in this way. The Russian troops that passed through Beuthen raided and looted the houses and raped the womenfolk. Many persons sought shelter at the vicarage, including the chemist and his family; and his three daughters, for whom we constantly prayed to the Virgin Mary for protection, thus escaped being raped by the Russians. On the morning of this memorable Shrove Tuesday a Russian major and his men took possession of the vicarage as it was still habitable, compared to the rest of the houses in the town. The priest, his aged mother, his housekeeper, the verger's wife, and the five members of the chemist's family were allowed to use the large living-room on the ground floor.

On the whole, the Russian officers and men billeted at the vicarage behaved in an orderly manner. Two chalices were, however, stolen out of a safe. When they departed on the Friday the rooms they had occupied, and in particular the kitchen, were in a state of considerable disorder. Marauding soldiers, some of them only partly attired in uniform, now raided the vicarage all day long...

On the following Sunday the inhabitants of the town had to line up on the market square for the purpose of being registered. The Russian commandant tried to remedy the confusion and disorder which prevailed in the town. He was kindly disposed to the priest, and his successors, too, made every effort to help the church and the priest as far as possible. No attempt was made to prevent the Germans from holding services, which were, in fact, resumed soon after the Russians seized the town. In many cases the priest was able to act as mediator.

For the first time in the history of the parish, an altar was set up outside the church when we held our procession on the Feast of Corpus Christi. The Russian interpreter, who was apparently a Jewess, placed

¹⁹³ s. *Beitraege*, Vol II, p 261 ff.

some flowers on the altar. The commandant was well-disposed towards the Christian faith. On one occasion he said to the priest, "I Chrestos, too", and made the sign of the Greek Cross. Two elderly Russian soldiers frequently attended our Sunday services.

... Shortly before Easter all the younger priests in the district had to report for work to the Russian commissary in Neusalz. We were detained there for three days in Stephan's shoe-store, which had been stripped bare, and were given to understand that we were to be sent to Russia with the rest of the menfolk in order to work. For three days we lived in a state of uncertainty and suspense which was most depressing. We were guarded by Russian sentries, but otherwise treated correctly and were not forced to work. Finally, on the third day, we learnt to our relief that a Russian Army order had been issued, to the effect that the priests were to be allowed to return to their parishes and resume their duties there. We had to see the Russian commissary, Captain Eppstein, a Jew from Moscow, several times before we received the identity papers he had made out for us. On one or two occasions we discussed theological matters with him. We were also given written permits allowing us to use bicycles in the course of our duties. Despite these permits, however, Russian soldiers frequently deprived the priests of their bicycles as they cycled along the country-roads, or else gave them a bicycle which was not in such a good condition in exchange. We always wore our soutanes and birettas when riding about, as they afforded a certain protection against the Russian and Polish soldiers.

On April 25th, 1945, Father Johannes Weberbauer¹⁹⁴, the parish-priest of Neustaedtel, who was a good friend of mine and my neighbour in the deanery of Freystadt, was abducted by Russian marauders in Windischborau, which was part of his parish. Despite the fact that he was in possession of identity papers and a permit made out by the Russian authorities, they took him away on a lorry. He had gone to the assistance of his parishioners when Russian soldiers looted the village, and had expressed his indignation at the behaviour of the Russians. Some religious books and a small pouch containing the sacrament for the sick, which he had been carrying at the time, were later found by the wayside. Since then all trace of him is missing. The rest of the priests in the deanery fared tolerably well, with the exception of Archpresbyter Johannes Guey¹⁹⁵, Ecclesiastical Counsellor and parish-priest of Freystadt, who was murdered when the Russians seized the town. Whilst trying to protect the Grey Sisters at the convent and the hospital from being raped, he was shot in the face by a Russian officer who was drunk. The bullet went through his throat. The nuns moved him to a private house, which lay in a more sheltered position in the centre of the town, and looked after him most devotedly, but he died three days later as a result of the big loss of blood he had suffered. He was seventy-two years old when

¹⁹⁴ Cf *The Martyrdom of Silesian Priests 1945/46*, p. 99.

¹⁹⁵ *The Martyrdom of Silesian Priests 1945/46*, p. 43 - 44

he died, and had always been extremely well-liked throughout the entire district. It was not until some time later that we learnt of his courageous deed and his martyrdom. Only a few persons were present at his funeral...

On July 16th, 1946, the Poles expelled most of the German inhabitants, including the parish-priest and the members of his household. At the request of the priest, the Polish priest in Beuthen, who had so far been living in a private house, now moved into the vicarage, in order to prevent the furniture and the house from being damaged and looted by marauders. We were taken to Neusalz on the Oder on a cart, and, after spending the night out in the open, our belongings and we ourselves were checked and searched most thoroughly by the Poles.

On July 21st, we arrived in Alfeld on the Leine, in Lower Saxony, and were then assigned to various villages in this district...

Report No. 138

Hangwalde, near Glogau ¹⁹⁶

Hangwalde was part of the parish of Beuthen on the Oder and numbered 20 Catholics and 140 persons of other denominations (1929)

As our house was situated at the end of a small lane, on the outskirts of the village, we were not molested by the Russians until the late afternoon. The first Russian to appear at the house was a youth of about seventeen who levelled his rifle at us as he approached us. After demanding alcohol, which we could not give him as we had none in the house, he proceeded to search all the rooms, and finally deprived the refugees from Upper Silesia, who were staying with us and who only had a few belongings, of their wedding-rings, jewelry, leather gloves, cigarettes, watches, and leather suitcases, etc. He threatened us the whole time with his rifle. During the next few days Russian soldiers raided the house at all hours and stole our valuables and our food supplies. Whenever Russian soldiers came to the house we womenfolk hid and luckily they never discovered us. The people who lived on the main road had a dreadful time. Many of the girls and women sought shelter at the convent or else hid in the forest. Mrs. St., a doctor's wife, told us that within a week as many as eighty women, who had been raped by Russians, came to her husband for medical attention. They included old women and children. There were several other doctors in Altheide, so one can well imagine the number of cases they must have had to deal with. One of the midwives at the maternity home who tried to protect some of the patients was shot by Russians. A similar case happened in Neuheide, where a young girl was the victim. A forester, whose house

¹⁹⁶ s *Beitraege*, Vol III, p 260 ff.

was raided and looted, was also shot by the Russians. On one occasion when my aunt and I were in the cemetery at Neuheide, we saw one of the grave-diggers digging a huge grave for twenty German soldiers. They had been shot by the Russians who were taking them to internment camps, solely because they were too exhausted to walk any further. Many people, including numerous soldiers, found life so unbearable that they committed suicide. Both during the day and at night we constantly lived in fear and trembling of what the Russians might do to us. We frequently heard people screaming for help, but we were powerless to go to their aid and fully expected the same fate to befall us at any moment. — Despite the fact that our village had not suffered any damage at all during military operations, it nevertheless presented a dreadful appearance, for the Russians had wrought complete havoc in a most thorough fashion after seizing it...

... In addition to a Russian guard company, there were now Poles stationed in the village, too. The Russians and the Poles often used to rob one another, but when it came to robbing the Germans they always worked hand in hand. All the farms which were untenanted were looted, and furniture and agricultural machines which could still be used were removed. Things that could not be removed were simply demolished. They smashed all the electric insulators by firing at them and brought down all the overhead wires, which lay strewn about in the streets. They smashed all the windows and damaged doors, gates, chimneys, and roofs, and even the concrete pillars of fences. The Polish mayor made no attempt whatsoever to check this vandalism. Whenever the Polish militia-men were drunk, which occurred very frequently, they tormented the Germans to their heart's content.

The fields, too, were a desolate sight, — full of weeds and completely neglected. The Poles had no intention of tilling the land, so there were not likely to be any harvests for years. They often told us that they did not intend to remain in Silesia for long, but hoped to return to their native country in the spring, despite the fact that the Russians had driven them out of it.

Report No. 139

The Parish of Klopschen, near Glogau ¹⁹⁷

The parish of Klopschen included 730 Catholics (1942) and 105 persons of other denominations (1929). A church (St Hedwig's) is mentioned in historical records in 1342. The present church probably dates from the fifteenth century. Until 1810 it belonged to the Augustinian prebendaries in Sagan.

... Despite the attacks launched by the German air force, which continued for some time, the Russian troops that had advanced from the south and the east seized the village on February 11th, 1945. They

¹⁹⁷ s. *Beitraege*, Vol. II, p. 274 ff

immediately raided all the houses and searched them for German soldiers who might be in hiding there. They robbed us of our watches, knives, jewelry, cigarettes and tobacco. They searched all the rooms for alcohol and also for women, and subjected the latter to dreadful atrocities. Most of the soldiers were drunk, and we had some terrible experiences. On February 13th, the two hundred Germans in Klopschen were forced to leave the village. Russian guards took us to a neighbouring village (Andersdorf), which had been evacuated, and there left us to our fate. We remained in Andersdorf ten days and lived in untenanted inns most of the time. Here, too, Russian soldiers continued to molest us. In the meantime, all the houses in Klopschen, including the vicarage, were looted, and the Russian commanding officer set up his headquarters at the vicarage. We returned to Klopschen on February 23rd, 1945. The convent belonging to the Grey Sisters, which had meanwhile been occupied by several Russian officers of high rank, was the only building which was still fairly habitable, and the nuns were able to move into it once more. As has already been mentioned, the parish-priest was not allowed to return to the vicarage as it had meanwhile been turned into Russian headquarters. The houses at the southern end of the village were allotted to us as living accommodation, and a German mayor was appointed (Mr. K., the joiner) who, together with the rest of the Germans, had to report for work to the Russians every day (rounding up the cattle which had escaped from the stables, looking after it, tilling the fields, etc.). Those who worked received rations of bread and sometimes meat and other foodstuffs, but the rations were very meagre. The priest, however, received no rations since he did no "work"! And no rations were issued to children and old persons! The Russians would not allow us to hold services in the church until Easter Sunday, 1945, but the priest was able to celebrate mass in the chapel of the convent belonging to the Grey Sisters prior to that date, as the parish-priest of Klaudau appeared in Klopschen one day and brought him some consecrated wafers, wine, and candles. Most of the velvet, brocade, linen and cloth vestments had been stolen, and all the purple ones were missing. The Russians had also stolen all the candles and had drunk the sacramental wine. They had wrought havoc in the church and the vestry, had damaged the tabernacle, and smashed some of the candelabra. Some of the vestments were later found on various farms, but they were in such a filthy condition that it took the nuns a long time to clean and mend them. The monstrance and two chalices were also retrieved in the course of time. Some of the display pipes in the organ had been removed and bent, but otherwise the organ had not suffered any damage. All the clothes and linen which the priest had been obliged to leave behind at the vicarage, when he had been sent to Andersdorf with the rest of the villagers, had disappeared. The furniture had been removed by degrees, until all that remained was a Berdux grand piano. As the Russians did not know what to do with it, they finally allowed the priest to keep it. The Russians, incidentally, did not remove the library at the vicarage. The present Polish priest, who is well-disposed towards the Germans, is

presumably taking care of it. Despite his frequent requests, the priest was not allowed to retrieve the parochial records and church registers. The only church registers he was allowed to keep were those of 1890 and 1900. When the priest was eventually allowed to enter the vicarage again after the Russian commandant had departed, he discovered that there were only a few files left. It is to be hoped that these at least will be preserved. The rest of the files had been used as "waste paper" for all sorts of purposes...

The position of the Germans who were still living in the village changed completely when Poles from various districts began to settle down there. On June 27th, 1945, some of the German inhabitants, including the Grey Sisters, were expelled from the village. Carrying the last of their belongings, they left Klopschen on foot and trekked along the highway, not knowing whither their journey would take them... On August 23rd, 1947, the last of the German inhabitants left Klopschen. We were taken to Glogau on carts by the Poles, and, on arriving there, were put into cattle-trucks and sent to the collecting camp in Sorau... The former parishioners of Klopschen are now scattered throughout various districts in the east and the west, some of them in the district of Kamenz, in Muelzen, and Pohlen, but most of them in Saxony and Thuringia. A few of them have settled in Brandenburg, Westphalia, Hanover, and Bavaria...

Report No. 140

The Parish of Kuttlau, near Glogau ¹⁹⁸

The parish of Kuttlau included 1,330 Catholics (1942) and 2,890 persons of other denominations (1929). A church (St Martin's) is mentioned in historical records in 1318. The present church was built in 1731.

The Russians entered the village on the morning of February 4th, 1945. There was some fierce fighting near the church and the vicarage, and the Russians cornered us twice. In the afternoon five families set out from Kuttlau to trek to the other side of the Oder, via Glogau. We were overtaken by the Russians near Neustaedt, and for days on end were subjected to dreadful atrocities — looting, shooting, and rape. As all the bridges across the Oder, including foot-bridges across ditches, had been blown up, we were unable to return to Kuttlau for six weeks. Some Jews in the Russian Army and a foreigner, who knew me from the services I had held for foreigners, eventually helped us to get back to Kuttlau. On the whole, the Russians were fairly respectful in their behaviour towards the Catholic priest, provided that the latter did not attempt to interfere when they were after women. I was free to move about as I pleased, but of course they gave me no guarantee as to my personal safety. On our return we found that several houses in the village had been destroyed by fire in the meantime, and that the church had

¹⁹⁸ s. *Beitraege*, Vol. II, p. 277 ff.

been hit by shells in about twenty different places, and the buildings belonging to the church and the vicarage, with the exception of the latter, very badly damaged by large shells.

The Russian commandant was very lenient with the Germans. He allowed us to hold our services, helped us to repair the church, which, incidentally, had not been looted, and in fact protected us from being turned out of the village when the Germans living on the east side of the Oder were ruthlessly expelled on June 29th, 1945.

Until October, 1945, we managed to get along fairly well with the Polish militia. At the beginning of October, however, a new militia unit and a Polish priest arrived in the village. The latter had been the leader of a band of partisans; his manners were wild and uncouth, and his habits were by no means befitting for a priest. He was the best spy the militia had and even denounced those of his own fellow-countrymen who respected the Germans. Most of the hardships the Germans were forced to endure were inflicted on them at his instigation. On numerous occasions all the German families in the village were turned out of their homes. The Poles belaboured them with cudgels and would not allow them to take any of their belongings with them. By degrees the Germans were reduced to complete beggary and were even robbed of their bedding and their food. Instead of issuing official orders, the Poles, to an ever-increasing degree, resorted to the method of beating the men with rubber cudgels and hitting the women in the face. Three of the villagers were flogged to death in the cellar at the militia headquarters for no apparent reason. Very few Germans escaped some sort of corporal punishment or other. At the instigation of the Polish "priest" I, too, received fifteen strokes...

Divine service could no longer be held in the German language, and religious instruction was forbidden. The parish-priest tried to remedy the dire need of his parishioners by begging food from those Polish families who were well-disposed towards the Germans and by selling honey from his own bee-hives. The only legal tender was Polish money, but thanks to the sale of the honey we always managed to obtain a little money...

About the middle of July, 1946, the majority of Germans in the village were ordered to get ready to leave their native country, which they had defended so valiantly. Catholics and Protestants alike bade farewell to our beloved church, which was now in a state of sad neglect. A few of the inhabitants were forced to remain behind on the estate, where they had to work for the Poles. The Polish administrator, who had formerly served as an officer in the German army and hailed from Poznan, secretly assured the German priest, shortly before the latter left Kuttlau, that he would take care of the Germans who had been forced to remain behind. And by all accounts, they were actually given employment and food and were allowed to live in peace there. On the whole, all those who had served in the Prussian army were well-disposed

towards the Germans and often complained to us in confidence about the methods of the Poles...

At intervals from January, 1945, until February, 1947, various treks and groups of persons left Kuttlau and the neighbouring districts. The following brief account gives the date of their departure and their ultimate destination.

The first trek left in January, 1945, and proceeded as far as Niesky and Rietschen in Upper Lusatia, where it halted. The refugees then split up into groups and some of the families proceeded northwards to Cottbus and Jueterbog. According as to how large their teams of horses were, most of them proceeded to the territory extending from Bautzen to Bamberg and Marktredwitz, many of them stopping in the Gera district in Thuringia.

A second group of persons left on June 29th, 1945, after having been expelled. (This group included the inhabitants of Glogischdorf and Kotzemeuschel.) They proceeded to various towns and villages in Lower Lusatia, namely in the territory extending from Teuplitz to Goerlitz.

A third group, likewise consisting of expellees, left about the middle of July, 1946, and proceeded via Uelzen to Alfeld on the Leine, where they were then assigned to various villages in the vicinity.

A fourth group, likewise consisting of expellees, left in December, 1946, and were sent to the district of Zerbst in Thuringia.

A fifth group, also expellees, left in February, 1947, and proceeded to Dessau and the surrounding districts.

When the parish-priest left Kuttlau all the church registers and records were entrusted to the care of the Poles. — The priest failed to find the Protestant church registers. It is quite possible that they had been removed from Kuttlau and stored elsewhere for safety. — The registrar's records were destroyed by fire.

Report No. 141

The Parish of Marienquell, near Glogau¹⁹⁹

The parish of Marienquell included 612 Catholics (1942) and 376 persons of other denominations (1929). A church (St Michael's) is mentioned in historical records in 1293. The present church was built in the late Middle Ages and rebuilt in the eighteenth century. Until 1810 Marienquell belonged to the Augustinian prebendaries in Sagan.

... After we had fled from Marienquell on February 9th, 1945, those of the inhabitants who had remained behind were forced to evacuate the village that same night by German troops. Some of the villagers apparently fled to neighbouring villages and returned to Marienquell a short time afterwards. Farmer Bruno N., Farmer Bruno St., and his brother, Franz, who was a bachelor and lived at Marienquell near Goerlitz, who were

¹⁹⁹ s. *Beitraege*, Vol I, p. 157 ff

among those who returned shortly after the village had been evacuated, were shot by the Russians. Mr. Albert K., a shopkeeper, of Marienquell, who is said to have tried to help two young girls to hide from the Russians, was also shot. His wife and his daughter had previously fled to Berlin, to some relatives there, and his two sons were in the German Army. Two schoolboys were also shot by the Russians, — one of them a boy of thirteen, M., of Kleinkauer, and the other, ten-year old O., of Gross-Obisch. In May, 1946, Farmer F. was found shot near Thienels Court. His assassins had also robbed him.

Upon our return to Marienquell from Grossenborau we were constantly robbed by the Russians and the womenfolk were frequently molested. The Russians used to raid the houses in the village at night and search all the beds. The only place where the women were comparatively safe at night was in the hay-lofts and barns...

Upon our return we discovered that the house had been looted and practically everything stolen. The Russians had broken into the cellar underneath the barn adjoining the vicarage, and had removed all the clothes and linen we had stored there. They had wrought havoc in the vicarage itself. The iron safe had been forced open, the two monstresses and the rest of the contents (two ciboriums, two chalices, and a crucifix, etc.) had been stolen, and all the documents strewn about the rooms. Some of the latter were missing and cannot be replaced. The furniture was also removed, by degrees. The corner of the house, nearest to the gate, had been hit by a shell. The church was fortunately not damaged as seriously as had been expected. The roof was damaged, there were some holes in the brickwork, and several windows were broken. The vestry was in a state of complete chaos. Only a few of the vestments were left; all the copes had been stolen as well as the servers' and acolytes' surplices. The chalice-veil was missing, and only two chalices were left. Several banners had been stolen, the Sanctuary Lamp was missing, and the organ and the church-clock had been smashed. From May, 1945, onwards, the number of Poles who settled in the village increased rapidly. All the farms and houses are now occupied by Poles. — We have been reduced to beggary and possess nothing we can call our own...

Report No. 142

The Parish of Wiesau-Grosslogisch, near Glogau ²⁰⁰

The parish of Wiesau-Grosslogisch included 566 Catholics (1942) and 2,956 persons of other denominations (1929). A church (St Michael's) is mentioned in historical records in 1376. The present church was probably built in 1666. — The chapel of ease at Kunzendorf (St Peter's and St Paul's) is mentioned in historical records as the parish-church in 1366. The present church there was built about the middle of the sixteenth century. — The chapel of ease at Thamm (St Bartholomew's) is mentioned in historical records in 1376. The present church there was probably built during the second half of the sixteenth century.

1) *The Churches*

The parish-church in Gross-Logisch was fortunately spared. The brick-work of the belfry was slightly damaged by a shell, but fortunately that was all. The only thing that was damaged inside the church was a statue of St. Anthony, which was of no great value as a work of art. Mrs. F. rescued the vestments which had been stored at the church. Unfortunately, all those stored at the vicarage were stolen and most of the sacred linen, too, with the exception of a few odd pieces. The chalices, the monstrance, and the church records had been previously buried in a grave in the churchyard, and were thus preserved. No damage was done in the churchyard.

The windows and the roof of the church in Buchendamm were badly damaged. The organ and most of the statues were smashed. The sacred linen and the vestments were stolen, and all that remained of the chalices were the stems. Mrs. F. had taken care of all the above-mentioned things until the end of June, 1945. In July, however, Ukrainian farm-hands wrought havoc in the church and it could no longer be used for services. They also did considerable damage in the churchyard.

The church in Kunzendorf fared much better. A few windows were smashed, and an altar-cloth and some of the servers' surplices were stolen, but otherwise none of the fittings were damaged. A number of war victims, Germans and Russians alike, were buried in the churchyard.

2) *The Parishioners*

The dreadful results of the war and the terrible conditions which prevailed later on affected community life in the parish to a very considerable extent. Some of the parishioners fled at the end of January and beginning of February, 1945, before the village was seized by the Russians, and they are now scattered throughout various districts. Those who remained could tell a sad tale about all the sufferings and hardships they were forced to endure. Unfortunately, there were several casualties when the Russians seized the village on February 10th, and the following persons were shot:

- 1) Mr. Kochanski, of Klemnitz, a member of the young men's association,
- 2) Gotthard Fengler, a schoolboy, of Leipe (and his mother?),
- 3) Mrs. Anna Richter and her daughter, Gertrud, of Leipe,
- 4) Family Fritz Broeggelhoff (husband, wife, and two children), of Leipe,
- 5) Family Grieger (husband, wife, and one child), of Ransdorf.

With the exception of the first of the above-named persons, all the dead were buried together in one grave in Leipe. The grave is at the back of Mr. Broeggelhoff's house, which was destroyed by fire... We are going to hold a memorial service for the dead when we return home.

The number of parishioners was reduced very considerably as a result of the expulsion measures enforced by the Poles on June 28th, 1945.

Only ten per cent of the former number were left. By the end of September a few more persons had returned and there were now twelve per cent of the former number of parishioners, that is to say about seventy persons in the whole parish! It was heart-breaking to see them as they trudged along the village street in small groups, carrying the last of their belongings, most of which the Poles then stole. Most of the German expellees were reduced to complete beggary by the time they reached their destination and were dependent on the charity of strangers. Death also claimed two of the expellees, namely old Mr. Kasimir Furian, and our little favourite, Bernward Vogel.

The following persons died in Buchendamm: August Solomo, who was buried on July 27th, 1945, and Emma Nater, who was found dead when someone called to visit her at her home and was buried on September 9th, 1945. May they rest in peace!

Sunday services were held for those of the parishioners who had remained behind. On two or three occasions services were also held in Buchendamm, and the Russian commandant kindly placed a car at the priest's disposal to take him there...

3) *The Villages*

The war and its after-effects made itself felt very considerably in the villages of the parish. Gross-Logisch did not suffer very much damage, but in Wiesau several houses on the main thoroughfare were hit by shells. Buchendamm suffered most. About fifty per cent of the buildings were damaged, for the most part by German dive-bombers which attacked the Russian troops, in an attempt to prevent them from advancing towards Primkenau...

4) *The Vicarages*

The vicarage, most of the furniture, and the buildings belonging to the vicarage were not damaged, apart from some slight damage to the doors and the windows. The priest's house in Kunzendorf was likewise undamaged, but the priest's house in Buchendamm was hit by an incendiary bomb and destroyed by fire.

5) *The Priest and the Members of his Household*

The priest left the parish on the evening of January 31st, 1945, and from February 1st to May 28th, acted as assistant to the priest of St. Jacob's in Goerlitz. On February 9th, he tried to return home, but was unable to get through to Gross-Logisch. On May 29th, he set out with a trek of refugees from Glogau and Fraustadt and, proceeding via Rothenburg, Sagan, Sprottau, Waltersdorf, and Klopschen, reached Gross-Logisch four days later. He arrived home at four o'clock in the afternoon, on June 2nd, and from then onwards until he was arrested by the Poles on September 26th, 1945, was allowed to go about his clerical duties unhindered.

In the afternoon, after the priest had been arrested, a gang of Poles appeared at the vicarage, ransacked the house, and searched all the rooms, the stoves, the hay-loft, and the attic for firearms. Next morning five or six marauders appeared. They were armed with revolvers, and, after shouting and carrying on like madmen, they surrounded the house and forced us to leave at once. We had no time to gather any of our belongings together. The only thing we managed to take with us was a loaf of bread. The Poles behaved like lunatics. In the meantime the Polish mayor drove up in a cart, and a crowd of Poles swarmed into the yard. They rushed into the house, ransacked all the rooms, and stole whatever they could find. They even raided the stables, pulled nuts which were still unripe from the trees, plucked the grapes and the flowers, and in fact stole everything that was movable. The Polish mayor, incidentally, acted as the ringleader... Some of the Poles broke into the church and looted it...

The priest was detained by the Poles until October 13th, 1945, and was then expelled from Silesia on October 14th, and sent across the Neisse at Forst.

Report No. 143

The Parish of Freystadt, Lower Silesia²⁰¹

The town of Freystadt in Lower Silesia numbered 873 Catholics (1942) and 5,684 persons of other denominations (1929). A church (The Purification of the Virgin Mary) is mentioned in historical records in 1273. The present church was built during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

... I arrived in Freystadt on February 15th, 1945, at noon. The town was a scene of desolation and destruction. The streets were filthy. Hay, straw, and fodder, which had been stolen from the farmers, had been scattered about all over the place, and it took a hundred men a week to make the streets passable. After I had found my wife, who had sought shelter at the house of some friends, I went along to the vicarage to ascertain how Archpresbyter Guzy, who was an invalid, had fared. On reaching his house, I was horrified to see the chaos that had been wrought. The doors had been taken off their hinges, the staircases were in a filthy state, and all the rooms had been ransacked. The streets were deserted, despite the fact that it was broad daylight. As no one could venture very far, I consoled myself for the time being with the thought that I should probably get some information as to the whereabouts of Archpresbyter Guzy very soon. A few days later all the men had to report for registration, and it was then that I learnt that a Catholic who had a house in Herren Street had given Archpresbyter G. accommodation and that the latter had been seriously injured. A Russian had shot him on February 13th (at the convent). He died on February 21st,

²⁰¹ s. *Beitraege*, Vol III, p. 222.

at the house of the parishioner who had taken him in.²⁰² Father George W., the locum tenens, who had attended to parochial matters during Archpresbyter Guzy's illness, officiated at the funeral. Owing to the fact that the Russians were constantly committing atrocities, only a few persons attended the funeral. The nuns were not even allowed to wear the habit of their order. I carried the crucifix at the head of the funeral procession. From February 25th, onwards we were once more allowed to hold our services. As the organ had been damaged we had to use a harmonium... On the Feast of Corpus Christi the Russian commandant issued an order, to the effect that the day was to be observed as a general holiday and that all persons of other denominations who failed to comply with this order would be punished. During my absence from the town the church itself was not damaged. The vicarage was used as the headquarters of the OGPU for a while, and no one was allowed to stand about in the vicinity of the building. The Catholic churchyard was a picture of destruction. Office furniture, pictures, damaged carts, and numerous other objects lay strewn about among the graves. As the plant at the waterworks had been demolished, we had to get our drinking-water from the pump in the churchyard. Many of the inhabitants were the victims of Russian terrorism. The following members of the Catholic parish were killed by Russians: Mr. Ignaz Ptalk, a tenant farmer, whose house was raided by Russians. They invited him to join in a drinking orgy. After a while he got up to go to bed, as he was tired. As he stood up, his Russian "host" shot him in the neck. Mr. Otto Zalfen was shot in the street. Alfons Rodewald, a landowner of Obersiegersdorf, who had six young children, was arrested by the Russians and shot. Miss Anna Buerger, who was seventy, died after having been raped and mishandled by Russians in her apartment...

At the end of June, 1945, the Poles began expelling the Germans from Freystadt.

Report No. 144

The Parish of Grossenborau, near Freystadt²⁰³

The parish of Grossenborau included 342 Catholics (1942) and 4,270 persons of other denominations (1929). A church (St Lawrence's) is mentioned in historical records in 1376. The present church was built later than the middle of the sixteenth century — The chapel of ease at Zoelling (St Martin's) was founded between 1220 and 1233. The present church was built in either the fifteenth or sixteenth century. Zoelling was an independent parish until 1767 and belonged to the collegiate monastery in Glogau until 1810. The church is a place of pilgrimage and there is also a chapel dedicated to St Anne.

²⁰² For details regarding the death of Archpresbyter Guzy cf. *The Martyrdom of Silesian Priests 1945/46*, p 43-44

²⁰³ s. *Betraege*, Vol. III, p 238 ff

... The Russians seized the village on the Monday morning, February 12th, 1945. On the Sunday, two-thirds of the population had been evacuated, whilst the rest of the inhabitants, including the priest, remained in the village. After the German troops had retreated to the upper end of the village and had engaged with the enemy, the latter effected his entry into the village without any further clashes occurring, and did not molest the inhabitants. The only objective which the Russians shelled was the church-tower, as they assumed that the German troops had set up a look-out post there. Three shells hit the upper part of the tower, with the result that falling brickwork and tiles damaged the roof of the church. The church was otherwise undamaged. Most of the damage in the village was caused intentionally by Russian farm-labourers. They set fire to five farms, which were razed to the ground. Russian stragglers, who had detached themselves from their units, robbed the inhabitants and molested the women and girls in an abominable manner. Russian soldiers and civilians, who were under the influence of drink, killed seven of the villagers on one day. Looting and raping continued even after the capitulation of the German Army. The vicarage, however, was not looted, nor were the priest, his parents nor his sister molested in any way by the Russians...

The enemy wrought havoc in the chapel of ease at Zoelling. The Consecrated Host had been removed from the church prior to the arrival of the Russians. The latter desecrated and damaged the chalices and the vestments. Marauders smashed the high altar and the two side-altars, in the hope of finding hidden treasures. The villagers repaired the damage that had been done, and the first service was held at Whitsuntide. After every service, however, the church was again raided and looted. The members of the Russian unit in charge of the veterinary hospital in the village were apparently firmly convinced that they would find hidden treasures somewhere in the church...

Report No. 145

The Parish of Neusalz on the Oder and environs, near Freystadt²⁰⁴

The parish of Neusalz on the Oder included 4,000 Catholics (1942) and 18,175 persons of other denominations (1929). The present church (St Michael's) was built in 1596. Certain additions were made in 1880. Until 1731 Neusalz belonged to the parish of Rauden.

... On January 28th, 1945, the inhabitants of Neusalz were informed by loudspeakers in the streets that the town was to be evacuated. Evacuation was then effected by means of goods trains and passenger trains. Those of the inhabitants who possessed lorries used this means of transport to leave the town...

²⁰⁴ s. *Beitraege*, Vol. II, p. 279 ff

February 13th, 1945. At half-past five in the afternoon the cupola of the church caught fire. The conflagration spread and continued throughout the night. The fire could not be extinguished as there were not enough men to help and there was also a shortage of water...

Late the previous evening and during the night Russian units had seized various districts of the town. After we had extinguished several fires, we saw long columns of Russian troops marching across the market square and down Berlin Street and proceeding in the direction of Berlin. Groups of Russian soldiers entered Breite Street and broke into houses and shops. They smashed all the shop windows and carried off their booty. Private houses were searched on the pretext of looking for fire-arms and German soldiers. All the houses that were untenanted were ransacked and looted...

We were considerably alarmed that noon by the news that part of the roof of the church, on the far side from the vicarage, was on fire. I rushed to the scene and discovered that a large area was already ablaze. Some of the smouldering beams from the tower had evidently crashed through the roof and fallen onto the rafters...

The destruction of various houses in the town by fire was not due to shelling but to arson or carelessness on the part of marauding troops.

February 15th, 1945. Orders were issued by the Russian commandant to the effect that all the inhabitants of the town had to report for registration and had to hand over all wireless sets, bicycles, typewriters, etc. In addition, all men up to the age of sixty and all women under fifty had to report for work. I went along to Russian headquarters in order to ascertain whether I, too, had to report for work and also to enquire as to whether it would be possible to hold services. The commandant informed me that the Russians did not intend to deprive the Germans of their religious freedom and that they would not interfere in church matters. The inhabitants, however, were to be urged to comply with all the orders issued by the commandant. Incidentally, the Russians never in any way disturbed our services. In fact, the first lot of Russian soldiers in the town never even entered the church. The troops that passed through Neusalz after it had been captured and those who occupied the town belonged to a Ukrainian army. Christianity is still a living force in the Ukraine, and this fact no doubt explains why the Russian troops behaved so considerately as far as our church was concerned...

June 4th, 1945: Notices were affixed in the town by the Polish administrative authorities, to the effect that the territories which had originally been Polish and had been annexed by Germanic tribes were to be incorporated in the Polish Republic and would be administered by the Polish State. The Germans were requested to obey all orders issued by the Polish authorities and to co-operate with the latter.

From then onwards, Polish infiltration gradually increased. At first, the Poles contented themselves with moving into shops, businesses, work-

shops and apartments which were untenanted, but later they turned the Germans who had remained in Neusalz out of their houses and shops, and even made them leave all their furniture and stock behind...

June 22nd: Troops that were passing through the district encamped in the woods near Rauden. Marauders broke into the church at Rauden.

June 29th: On the Feast of St. Peter and St. Paul services were held at seven-fifteen and ten o'clock. Mr. H. of Rauden reported that marauders had again broken into the church there. They had forced an entry by smashing the panels in the doors, which was an easy job as the panels were not made of solid wood. They had stolen one of the corporals and all the candles, and had damaged the crucifix on the altar, the cupboard in which the music was kept, and also the organ (some of the pipes had been removed). Luckily, they had not managed to open the safe under the tower which contained the chalices and sacred vessels. The Consecrated Host was now brought to Neusalz for safety and the tabernacle was left unlocked...

July 1st, 1945: When we entered the church at half-past six on the Sunday morning, together with the verger, we discovered to our horror that the slab of the high altar was leaning over to one side and that the contents of the tabernacle had been stolen. In addition, the brass sanctus bells, all the candles, the curtains of the confessionals, and the strip of felt off the communicants' bench were missing. The marauders had not entered the church by the door but through the leaded window next to the vestry. They had actually removed the heavy safe which contained a ciborium with about fifty holy wafers in it, a small ciborium cover, an ostensory and lunula, as well as one of the corporals and the hosts belonging to the church at Rauden.

Eighty worshippers came to early mass that morning and were horrified to see the sacrilege that had been committed. We first of all made an expiatory offering and then celebrated mass at the side-altar. At ten o'clock we celebrated High Mass and likewise made an expiatory offering. The safe was eventually found on September 12th, in the school-cellar, hidden under a heap of lumber. The holy wafers, the ciborium, and the ostensory were still in the safe, but the small ciborium cover and the lunula were missing. The latter, made of gilded silver, was the only object made of a precious metal; so it can be assumed that the marauders who broke into the church were experts...

July 3rd, 1945: H. reported that marauders had again broken into the church at Rauden and had stolen the altar carpet which, fortunately, was old and of no great value...

July 10th, 1945 The vicarages and churches in Oberherzogswaldau and Brunzelwaldau were raided and looted after the priests had been expelled by the Poles.

July 5th, 1946: We learnt that Archpresbyter Stephan of Deutsch-Wartenberg had been arrested in Gruenberg by the U.B....

July 16th, 1947: Archpresbyter Stephan's sister came to tell me that he had died during the night²⁰⁵, and she asked me to help with the funeral preparations. But, unfortunately, I was unable to render her this service, for soon after she had called to see me, two Polish officials appeared at the house and informed me that I was to be expelled and that I must be ready to leave in an hour's time. I eventually managed to persuade them to give me a little longer so as to enable me to pack up my belongings...

The grammar-school was used as the collecting point for the expellees. The latter included Germans from Neusalz and the surrounding districts, and also from Freystadt and Glogau, and numbered 1,563. So-called customs authorities searched and checked the expellees and their luggage, and the way the expellees were treated during these proceedings depended entirely on the temper of the customs officials. The latter were particularly severe in the case of the priests...

In spite of their sorrow at having to leave their homes and their country, the Germans were relieved to think that they had at last escaped the indescribable terrorism and serfdom to which they had been subjected during the past months...

*Inhabitants of Neusalz and environs who were killed during
the Russian Occupation*

- 1) Bogacki, mill-owner, was shot;
- 2) Johann Schubert, the vergier of Rauden church, was shot;
- 3) Pohl, son of a policeman, was shot;
- 4) Elisabeth Seeliger, mill-worker, whose skull was smashed with a hatchet;
- 5) Kieke, baker, whose skull was smashed with a hatchet;
- 6) Walter Decker, born May 16, 1918, wounded and later found hanged;
- 7) Maria Klinitzke, farmer's wife, of Kusser, was shot on February 13, 1945;
- 8) Karl Blumenberg, of Kusser, shot whilst trying to protect his wife and daughter from being raped;
- 9) Karl Kronig, bargee, of Margareth, found shot on his barge;
- 10) Kurt Reiche, of Waldruh, born August 21, 1907, was shot on February 15, 1945;
- 11) Gustav Grossmann, of Waldruh, born October 3, 1919, was shot on February 13, 1945;
- 12) Unglaube, workman, of Rauden, found shot in the forest;
- 13) Karl Scharf, born October 10, 1885, shot whilst fishing at Trockenau;
- 14) Hermann Hocke, born October 12, 1890, was also shot whilst fishing at Trockenau;

²⁰⁵ For details regarding the death and funeral of Archpresbyter Father Otto Stephan cf *The Martyrdom of Silesian Priests 1945/46*, p 88-89.

- 15) Pauline Tietze, née Fiedler, about seventy-five years old, was murdered;
- 16) Hugo Tietze, husband of the above, about seventy-eight years old, was later found murdered.

The following persons committed suicide:

- 1) Mr. and Mrs. Stephan, an aged couple, as they were afraid of the Russians;
- 2) Mr. Matzke, bank-clerk, on February 13, 1945, for the same reason as the above;
- 3) Mr. Herkt, mill-worker, of Trockenau, on February 13, 1945, likewise for the same reason;
- 4) Mr. Perl, painter, on March 15, 1946, in a state of despair.

Report No. 146

The Parish of Schwiebus, near Zuellichau-Schwiebus²⁰⁶

The town of Schwiebus, capital of the district of Schwiebus, numbered 2,950 Catholics (1942) and 12,417 persons of other denominations (1929). A church (St Michael's and St Mary's) is mentioned in historical records in 1379. The present church was built in the fifteenth century. The church was partly destroyed by fire in 1637 and 1640. It was restored and the west transept built in 1857.

On January 27th, 1945, the First White Russian Army crossed the Silesian frontier at Neu-Bentschen, Bomst, and Unruhstadt, north of Tirschtiegel. After capturing Rentschen, Kutschlau, Jordan, Rinnersdorf, and Muehlbock, the enemy surrounded Schwiebus on January 30th, 1945. On February 1st, 1945, at seven o'clock in the morning, whilst we were attending early mass, Russian troops entered the town, which capitulated. So far, Schwiebus had not felt the effects of the war at all, but conditions now changed rapidly.

The first lot of troops that passed through the town robbed us of our valuables, but it was not until the third day of the Russian Occupation that we were subjected to terrorization and atrocities of all kinds. Murder, arson, theft, and rape became the order of the day. Children of ten and old women, inmates of the old people's home, alike, were raped by Russian soldiers. More than one-third of the buildings in the town were destroyed by fire. The OGPU immediately resorted to its dreadful terrorist methods. Flogging, shooting, drunkenness, arson, rape, and murder, — such were the conditions that now prevailed in Schwiebus. Many of the inhabitants — about one-seventh of the population had remained in the town — committed suicide. Shops, houses, and dispensaries were looted, and the furniture and fittings thrown out onto the

²⁰⁶ s *Beitraege*, Vol V, p. 90 ff.

street or into the garden. Medical supplies, toys, pieces of furniture, and household utensils lay scattered about on the street outside the buildings that had been ransacked, and Russian tanks rolled over them. Whole rows of houses caught fire and burnt down. The Russians wrought complete havoc at St. Joseph's Convent and the Protestant hospital. Some time later, I walked through the empty rooms; all the bedding had been slit to pieces and feathers lay strewn all over the floor. Books, damaged beyond use, had been scattered about the rooms, and the Russians had poured syrup and preserves over them and, as if to add the crowning touch to the civilization they had brought us, had even covered them with human excrements. Incidentally, this description could be applied to every house in the town.

On February 7th, 1945, all the menfolk, irrespective of whether they were soldiers, civilians, priests, doctors, or members of other professions, were arrested by the Russians and taken to a Russian internment camp, which was located near Reppen, as fierce combats were already in progress in the region of Frankfort on the Oder. There were eleven thousand of us. The provost and Joseph Fuhrmann, the district vicar, trudged along next to me as we proceeded to the camp. Joseph Fuhrmann died in Russia on September 1st, 1946. The Russians made him work in a brickyard, but the work he had to do was so heavy and he was so weak and undernourished that he developed serious heart trouble. The Russian woman-doctor at the camp certified him as sick and not fit for work, and he was to be released about the middle of September and sent back to Germany. The foreman, who was of German origin, forced him to work, however, and he died two or three days later.

On February 22nd, 1945, shortly before we were to be sent to Russia. I managed to escape from the internment camp, and, after proceeding on foot via Sternberg, which had been demolished completely, arrived in Schwiebus on February 24th.

There were hardly any Germans left in Schwiebus. All the houses had been ransacked and looted. Most of the buildings in the market square and many of the houses in Kirch Street, Glogau Street, and in Linden Square had been destroyed by fire. The streets were strewn with the corpses of soldiers, men, and women.

The interior of the church was a dreadful sight. Doors had been broken off their hinges, pews had been smashed, and the floor was littered with empty bottles and pieces of broken glass. Most of the vestments, the albs, and the rochets, had been torn to shreds and soiled with human excrements. The doors of the tabernacle had been wrenched off, and the Sanctuary Lamp and the organ had been smashed. Some of the organ pipes lay scattered about outside the church. Bullets had been fired at the ceiling and at the pulpit. The statue of Christ had been damaged and the hands hewn off. The statues of the angels on St. Mary's altar had also been damaged. The steel safe in the vestry had been forced open and the contents stolen. Fortunately, Dr. M. had previously buried all the sacred vessels which were of most value.

Quite by chance, I found my wife and our five children once more on Easter Saturday, March 31st, 1945. She had fled to a friend of ours, Father Schulz, in K., who, despite the fact that he was seventy, had most courageously protected the German women and girls. After a dreadful trek on foot, he died in Berlin in August, 1945.

Report No. 147

The Parish of Gruenberg²⁰⁷

The parish of Gruenberg included 3,275 Catholics (1942) and 30,696 persons of other denominations (1929). A church (St Hedwig's) is mentioned in historical records in 1317. The present church dates from the late Middle Ages.

The Fate of the Catholic Church and Parish during the Russian Occupation 1945/46

After shelling the town for a short time the Russians seized it at about three o'clock in the afternoon, on February 14th, 1945, which was Ash Wednesday. They advanced towards Gruenberg along the main road connecting Neusalz, Deutsch-Wartenberg, and Lawaldau, which they had seized on the two previous days. About five days before they seized Gruenberg, Russian tank units advanced towards the town via the bridge across the Oder at Tschicherzig, which had unfortunately not been blown up by the Germans. These Russian units, however, were repulsed and were practically annihilated in the course of combats in the Oder forest near Prittag. South of Gruenberg Russian tank units advanced from Neusalz via Freystadt. to Naumburg on the Bober, and, from February 10th to February 14th, caught up with the last of the refugee treks and shelled them. — About four thousand of the 36,000 inhabitants of Gruenberg had remained in the town, little foreseeing the terrible fate which was to befall them. A large percentage of those who had remained behind were Catholics and many of them belonged to the better and wealthier classes. — When the Russians entered the town the inhabitants fled into the air-raid shelters and cellars. Incidentally, all the municipal authorities, Party organizations, soldiers, and Volkssturm men left the town before the Russians arrived. On the morning of February 14th, prior to the arrival of the Russians, all the railway-lines, bridges, asphalted and paved roads in the vicinity of the town, as well as all the most valuable machines in the factories, the gas-works, waterworks, and the electric power-station, were blown up. The town had neither water nor light until the end of May.

When the Russians entered the town the parish-priest, wearing his soutane and biretta and carrying his breviary, walked through the crowds of soldiers in the streets all alone and unmolested, and actually got as far

²⁰⁷ s. *Beitraege*, Vol III, p. 243 ff

as the Russian general staff headquarters at the entrance to the town (Breslau Street), where, with the help of a Russian officer who acted as interpreter, he negotiated with the commandant regarding the surrender of the town. He was thus able to prevent the destruction of the town by shelling when the troops occupied it. From the Wednesday until the following Monday no Russian soldiers entered either the church or the vicarage. The priest celebrated mass every day and held three services on Sundays, without the Russians interfering or causing any disturbances... Despite the fact that it was hardly safe to be out in the streets, the services on Sundays and weekdays were well attended. Numerous Protestants came to our services, as their clergymen did not venture to hold any services during the first eight weeks of the Russian Occupation. In this time of dire distress all religious-minded persons sought comfort and strength in our church...

The atrocities committed in the town in the meantime, however, defy description. The Russian hordes had the right to loot the town three days, but actually the looting lasted at least three weeks. Russian units had built a new bridge across the Oder near Milzig, and for weeks on end Russian troops swarmed into the town and the neighbouring villages in never-ending columns. Many villages and farms, and entire districts and whole rows of streets in the town were destroyed by fire. Russians and Poles looted the large department stores and then set fire to them. They ransacked all the houses, threw the furniture out onto the streets and yards, and smashed all the doors and windows. Most of the houses and apartments were in a filthy state. Women and girls were constantly at the mercy of the soldiers as there was no means of preventing them from entering the houses. During the day and also at night, cries of help and screams of fear re-echoed through the streets. The number of persons who died as a result of being shot, wounded, beaten or raped, was so great that it was impossible to give all the victims a decent burial. They were interred in yards and gardens and in spare plots of land. To make matters even worse, there were huge supplies of alcohol in Gruenberg. At the latter end of the war the Nazis had caused all stocks of wines and spirits in Hamburg, Bremen, and the Rhine and Moselle districts to be transferred to Silesia, in particular to Gruenberg. In addition, there already were large stocks of wine, champagne, and cognac in the town. Thus it was hardly surprising that the Russian soldiers were drunk most of the time. Words cannot describe the dreadful atrocities committed by them whilst under the influence of drink. Their bestiality and the way they raped young women, old women, girls, and even schoolchildren, both in the houses they entered and also in the streets, was so terrible that, of the four thousand persons who had remained in Gruenberg, about five hundred, in fact whole families, committed suicide during the first three weeks of the Occupation. I am pleased to say that there was not a single Catholic among all those who committed suicide, a fact which not only caused considerable surprise but also dismay among the Protestant clergy. This was undoubtedly the

result of the devotions held by the priest every evening from Christmas, 1944, onwards, when the Russian invasion was imminent. These devotions consisted of sermons, discussion, prayers, and the Holy Sacrament, and their purpose was to give the many parishioners who attended courage and strength, faith in the Lord, and a feeling of responsibility. During the dreadful weeks that followed after the Russians seized the town, many Catholics and a large number of Protestants, too, sought refuge at the vicarage and the church. Some nights there were as many as eighty persons at the vicarage, but during all these weeks not a single person who sheltered at the vicarage was either molested or mishandled, despite the fact that Russian soldiers regularly held drunken orgies in the rooms on the ground floor. Indeed, they managed to drink up the huge supplies of wine, champagne, spirits, and pure alcohol stored in a building near the church, in about six to eight weeks. During these eight weeks the priest, attired in his soutane, constantly kept guard near the front door or in the entrance-hall, both during the day and at night, in order to see that no atrocities were committed and to intervene if the situation threatened to become dangerous... It was deeply moving and also consoling to see the exemplary life led by Catholics and Protestants alike, the fervour with which they prayed, and their spirit of self-sacrifice, which somehow reminded one of the martyrs of early Christianity. Every morning, whilst the soldiers were sleeping off the effects of their nightly drinking-bout, they would all assemble in the church, and most of the Catholics would usually take Holy Communion. In a way I am thankful I experienced these dreadful weeks, for I saw so many manifestations of a true and living Christian spirit...

Special mention must be made of the fact that the church and vicarage, from April, 1945, onwards, enjoyed the protection of the Russian OGPU. This may sound rather strange. It was obviously the work of God. Although Russian soldiers themselves had actually told us that the OGPU commissars were inhuman brutes, a description which seemed to hold good elsewhere, here in Gruenberg the OGPU commissar, a certain Colonel Sch., did everything in his power to protect and help the church and the vicarage... We thus enjoyed a certain amount of security until May, 1945, when the Poles took over the administration and the OGPU moved westwards. Thanks to the intercession of the Colonel, the priest managed to obtain the release of several parishioners who had been arrested and imprisoned, and, in fact, already sentenced to deportation, by the OGPU.

On Saturday, May 12th, the first lot of Polish officials marched into the town, to the strains of a military band, and promptly hoisted the Polish flag on all the houses they occupied. So far we had no idea whatsoever of what had happened in Western Germany. We did not even know that Germany had capitulated and that Hitler's regime had come to an end, and we were therefore completely at a loss to understand the significance of this new Occupation. — The number of inhabitants in Gruenberg had meanwhile increased from four thousand

to about seven thousand, owing to the return of numerous persons from the territory west of the Oder and Neisse. As the mail and train services were not operating and we had neither wireless sets nor any other means of communication, we were entirely cut off from the rest of the world. Indeed, we were not even informed of the fact that Gruenberg had been severed from Silesia and Breslau, as regards political, economic, and ecclesiastical matters, and assigned to the Polish province of Poznan. As far as ecclesiastical matters were concerned, Gruenberg was now under the administration of Cardinal Hlond, the Primate of Poland... After the railway service between Gruenberg, Rothenburg, Wollstein, and Poznan was once more resumed the Poles simply swarmed into the Gruenberg district. By the end of 1945 the number of Poles who had settled in the town of Gruenberg amounted to almost eighteen thousand.

Then came the fatal day! On Sunday, June 24th, 1945 (the Feast of St. John the Baptist, patron saint of our diocese), the Polish mayor suddenly appeared at the vicarage, shortly after the Polish service was over, and, greatly agitated, told us that he had received orders by phone from the Polish (that is to say, Soviet) Government in Lublin, to the effect that all Germans in the town of Gruenberg and the neighbouring rural areas were to be expelled within six hours' time. They were to proceed on foot and were to be sent across the Oder and the Neisse to the west. Polish troops, so the mayor informed us, were already approaching the town in order to see that the expulsion measures were enforced. The only persons allowed to remain in the town by special permission of the Polish authorities were clergymen, skilled workers, and persons who were ill. The expellees — grown-ups and children of all ages — numbered more than five thousand. As they left the town in an endless procession, Polish soldiers fell upon them, beating and flogging them in a blind rage. Three Polish officers and a sergeant, who were supposed to be in charge of the expulsion, came to my quarters as they could no longer bear to witness the dreadful scenes which were being enacted in the streets. They were horrified at the bestiality of their fellow-countrymen, but were powerless to put a stop to it. The long treks of expellees which now passed through Gruenberg day and night were indeed a tragic sight, and there were many painful farewell scenes... Robbed of all they possessed and literally stripped of the last of their belongings, beaten and flogged, these poor creatures trudged along in the wind and the rain, with no roof or shelter over their heads, not knowing where they would find a new abode.

... The Germans who remained behind (about a thousand) were now deprived of all their property, turned out of their homes, and forced to live crowded together in old, dilapidated houses, located in the smallest, out-of-the-way alleys in the town. They were constantly being interrogated and checked by the Polish secret police and the Polish militia, and on these occasions groups of fifteen to twenty persons were ruthlessly arrested, regardless of whether they had any family or not, detained in camps or prisons for several days, and then finally sent

across the frontier (Oder-Neisse line), after having been previously robbed of all their belongings. All attempts to intercede with the Polish authorities proved futile. After I was arrested I myself witnessed some dreadful scenes in prison, when the Germans were flogged and beaten by the Poles... Mr. Richard Kintzel, an architect, who was seventy-five, was arrested by the Polish secret police, allegedly because he was a "capitalist"; every morning between six and seven o'clock, for weeks on end, whilst he was in prison, he was forced to go down on his knees and clean the streets and pavements outside the prison with a small brush, in all kinds of weather. Mr. Kintzel had lost six sons in the war, and his youngest son, aged fourteen, was abducted and taken to Russia, where he later died. Mr. Kintzel himself was expelled from Gruenberg by the Poles, but was later arrested by the Russians in Muelhausen, in Thuringia, and tortured to death in the Russian concentration camp at Sachsenhausen.

... The Poles forced us to sign a written statement, to the effect that we were leaving Polish territory of our own free will.

Report No. 148

The Parish of Milzig, near Gruenberg ²⁰⁸

The parish of Milzig included 472 Catholics (1942) and 6,237 persons of other denominations (1929). A church (St Hedwig's) is mentioned in historical records in 1376. The present church was built about 1798. A chapel of ease at Fuerstenreich (St Joseph's) existed as early as 1600. The present church there was built in 1908.

... I was in Cosel, near Freystadt, when Russian units, which had advanced from Steinau and Freystadt, seized the town on February 17th, 1945 (Ash Wednesday). The Russians immediately rounded up all men under fifty, including the parish-priest of Schweinitz, near Gruenberg, and the chaplain of Gruenberg, and took them off to Russia. Then they began raping women and girls (between the ages of ten and seventy), abducting, robbing, and assaulting persons, and shooting those who tried to defend themselves, or else forcing them to work on the new airfields that were being constructed. In the neighbouring village of Schoenaich twelve men and women were shot during the first night of the Russian Occupation, either because they attempted to flee or tried to protect themselves against being raped.

Until May 4th, 1945, Cosel was practically part of the fighting zone, and we thus suffered considerably as reinforcements of Russian OGPU units and soldiers were constantly passing through the town, both during the day and at night. No wonder most of the inhabitants were on the verge of a nervous breakdown. On one occasion, after having been threatened repeatedly, P. Mueller and I were forced to stand with our backs to a wall for hours on end whilst Russian soldiers levelled their

revolvers at us. Unfortunately, there was no Russian commandant in Cosel, so we were completely at the mercy of these inhuman brutes. It was hell on earth, but worse was to follow.

The sacramental wine and the candles were stolen out of the church, but otherwise the interior was in no way damaged, and we were therefore able to hold divine service and also funeral services, — the latter for the Protestants, too, as they had no pastor. It was not until June, 1945, after all the Germans had been expelled by the Poles, that marauders ransacked and looted the churches. In the course of my journeys I discovered that in various villages, as for example in Loettnitz and Nittritz, many persons, sometimes whole families, in fact, had committed suicide because they could no longer endure the terrorism to which they were constantly subjected, but, as far as I know, none of the persons who killed themselves were Catholics.

After the capitulation in May, 1945, things seemed fairly quiet, so the parish-priest of Milzig set out on his return journey to his parish, about twenty-six miles away. Milzig itself, apart from some slight damage caused by a few shells and two bombs, had managed to survive the war fairly well. The Russians had, however, built a bridge across the river at the spot where there had formerly only been a ferry, and this bridge later proved disastrous for us. The church had not been damaged in any way, but the vicarage had been ransacked and looted and was uninhabitable. The priest held services for those of the inhabitants who had returned, but attendance was not very good, as most of the parishioners were afraid to venture out of doors, since cases of assault, robbery, and rape were constantly occurring and it was therefore safest to keep in hiding. Our sufferings increased beyond endurance when the Russian troops retreating from Berlin and Czechoslovakia began crossing the new bridge at Milzig. There were no limits to the bestiality and licentiousness of these troops. The description given by Rachmanova of the conduct of the Russians is nothing compared to their behaviour. Girls and women were routed out of their hiding-places, out of the ditches and thickets where they had sought shelter from the Russian soldiers, and were beaten and raped. Older women who refused to tell the Russians where the younger ones had hidden were likewise beaten and raped. The menfolk were seized and abducted. I myself saw long treks of men and women, including hundreds of young persons, being marched across the bridge at Milzig, guarded by Russian pickets, on their way to Russia. We were reduced to utter despair and gave up all hope of conditions ever improving. There was not much I could do to help, either, as my life was constantly in danger.

On June 20th, 1945, in the midst of our sufferings, Polish militia suddenly appeared in Milzig and ordered all the German inhabitants to leave at once, namely at four o'clock in the morning, and proceed to the Neisse frontier, which was about 37½ miles away. In view of the unbearable conditions in Milzig, this order was greeted with something like relief by many of us. Indescribable scenes were enacted when the in-

habitants gathered together the last of their possessions which they had concealed in hiding-places, and the Russians, who were standing about in crowds, snatched everything from them. We were rounded up like cattle, and then set out on foot, escorted by Polish militiamen. Small children and old persons were wheeled in small handcarts. One of the parishioners, an old man of seventy, who had been beaten by Russians the previous night, died on the first day of our journey. We passed through various deserted villages and towns, the inhabitants of which had been expelled a short time previously. The hardships and sufferings we endured were almost unbearable. Whenever we were allowed to rest for a short time in the open, Russians and Poles assaulted us. The expellees who had managed to keep their watches and rings were forced to hand them over to the Polish officer in charge of the trek. Incidentally, I noticed that he had a whole box full!

Cases of murder, shooting, and rape occurred every day, especially at night.

The interior of the church at Milzig had meanwhile been ransacked, looted, and desecrated by Russians. They had stolen the steel tabernacle and had smashed the organ and the altar with a hatchet. The chapel of ease at Fuerstenreich, however, was still undamaged, and we were able to hold services there. One day, after the house had been searched twice, we were suddenly arrested by the Polish secret police (U.B.). On January 8th, 1946, we were locked up in a prison-cell and received nothing to eat but bread and water. On January 14th, 1946, we were eventually released, and, together with seven Grey Sisters, were sent to the Neisse frontier, via Guben. The only belongings we had were the clothes we were wearing. Before we were released from prison the Poles made us sign a statement, to the effect that we were leaving Polish territory "of our own free will". The inhabitants of Milzig, who were expelled previously, were scattered throughout Germany, some of them in Brandenburg, and others in Saxony and Mecklenburg.

Report No. 149

The Parish of Guben ²⁰⁹

The parish of Guben included 2,019 Catholics (1942) and 56,387 persons of other denominations (1929). Guben was originally under the ecclesiastical administration of the parishes of Neuzelle and Seitwann. The church (Holy Trinity) was built in the Gothic style in 1866. Guben became an independent parish on November 23, 1861.

... The battle raged for eight weeks. The town was shelled and bombed every day, sometimes for as long as six or eight hours without a break. There were several families living crowded together in the cellar at the vicarage until March 15th, when the German troops gave

²⁰⁹ s. *Beitraege*, Vol. II, p. 255 ff

orders that the civilian population was to be evacuated. The only person who remained behind was the parish-priest, as he realized that the soldiers were in need of some spiritual solace, and, furthermore, considered it his duty to take the last sacrament to those who were seriously wounded, and to give those who had been killed in action a fitting burial. The German general then appointed him as chaplain to the forces. He celebrated many a mass in the front trenches, only eighty yards away from the Russian lines. He removed some of the sacred vessels to Berlin (about 81 miles away), undertaking this journey by bicycle, as the train service was no longer operating and no motor vehicles were available. As the town was constantly being shelled, the only way of proceeding up the eighty steps on Church Hill was by crawling. St. himself writes as follows: "Very often when I went to visit the wounded I was obliged to crawl on all fours. Despite the fact that my bicycle and my small case containing the things needed for mass were damaged by shell splinters, I myself never even sustained as much as a scratch." He often held as many as three and four masses a day in the neighbouring villages, where units of the German division located in this fighting sector were stationed. Our troops blew up all the churches in order to prevent the enemy from using the towers as targets. The tower and the roof of the Catholic church had already been damaged, but the German sappers decided to spare it because they were fond of the priest, and so it was not blown up. Before the German troops retreated on April 17th, they blew up all the bridges. The town was already a mass of flames. The parish-priest was the last person to leave the town, but he returned again at the beginning of May, after a tedious and hazardous journey by bicycle from Berlin. The vicarage had been badly damaged by shells, and it took weeks to make a few of the rooms habitable again. Services were resumed immediately. At the instructions of the Russian commandant, the priest started a Catholic school in one of the rooms at the vicarage. Whilst divine service was being held on Whit Saturday marauders broke into the vicarage and stole vestments, chalices, clothes, and various other articles.

The most fatal day of all was June 20th, 1945. Within ten minutes' time all the Germans living in the district of the town located on the east bank of the Neisse were driven out of their homes by the Poles and forced to move to the district on the west bank, which was much smaller. They were only allowed to take a few of their belongings with them; all the rest of their property was confiscated. There were about eight hundred Poles in Guben, who had worked there as civilian workers during the war, and we two priests had always treated them considerately and had regularly held special services for them, despite the fact that we got into trouble with the German secret police on numerous occasions for doing so. These Poles, who lived on the east bank of the Neisse, now begged the parish-priest, though he could speak no Polish, to stay. He complied with their request in the hopes of perhaps being able to save the church and the vicarage, and he now divided his time in looking after the Germans in Guben West and after the Poles in Guben East...

Conditions in Guben West are most depressing. This district of the town is only small, but it is now inhabited by about 35,000 persons, and several families, numbering from twelve to fifteen persons, are obliged to share two small rooms and the use of a kitchen. Most of them are dreadfully in need of clothes, bedding, and household utensils, as they lost all their possessions when they were expelled. In addition, there is a serious shortage of food and fuel...

Report No. 150

The Parish of Primkenau, near Sprottau ²¹⁰

The parish of Primkenau included 733 Catholics (1942) and 6,945 persons of other denominations (1929). A church (The Assumption of the Virgin Mary) is mentioned in historical records in 1376. In 1719 it was destroyed by fire, but was rebuilt during the years 1720 to 1730 (the tower is older) in the baroque style.

... The shelling grew fiercer, and orders were suddenly issued that we were to seek shelter in the grounds of the castle. On February 11th, 1945, we spent the night out in the open there. Next morning (it was a Sunday) I deemed it advisable for us to return to town even though it had meanwhile been seized by the Russians. It was with considerable anxiety that I proceeded to the church, and I was overjoyed when I got there and discovered that it had not been damaged. My joy turned to dismay, however, when I entered and saw the dreadful havoc that had been wrought in our lovely, little church. The vicarage had also been ransacked and looted and was a picture of chaos and destruction. I do not wish to dwell on the terrible weeks that followed, for they were like an evil nightmare. Indeed, words fail me to describe those endless minutes which often seemed like eternity, the torture of constantly living in fear and trembling of what would happen to us, and the horrible experiences, especially at night, that we managed to survive. A relative of Dr. E., the ecclesiastical counsellor, of Breslau, who, together with her family, had been staying at the vicarage some time, once said to me in utter despair, "If only we'd stayed in the Rhineland! We thought the air-raids there were more than we could endure, but what we are going through here is much worse!" On one occasion the Communist mayor, who had been appointed by the Russians, was present when the vicarage was raided and he was so horrified and terrified that he muttered, "Heaven help us..." Most of the women in Primkenau were molested and raped by Russians. In this connection I feel I must mention the death of Mr. Finke, the tailor, on November 22nd, 1945. In order to protect his daughter he used to spend the night sitting on a chair, on guard behind the front door of his house. On one occasion the Russian OGPU came to

²¹⁰ s. *Beutraege*, Vol. II, p. 319 ff

the house, and as they could not get in through the door they entered by way of a window and stabbed him. He lies buried by the church-wall near to the entrance to the lodge...

The inhabitants of Primkenau suffered most during the early days of the Russian Occupation, when they were completely at the mercy of the troops stationed in the town and of those who passed through. The number of cases of suicide increased to about thirty. Incidentally, several persons committed suicide shortly before the Russians seized the town, but none of them were Catholics.

Conditions improved slightly when the Russian commandant set up his headquarters in the town (in the ducal residence). Though greatly feared by everyone, he was very kind to the parish-priest, and most helpful and obliging. He gave instructions that the church was to be cleaned and tidied up, and allowed the priest complete freedom of action in his clerical duties and gave orders that he was, on no account, to be forced to work for the Russians.

As the Protestant church had been badly shelled and could no longer be used for services, the parishioners, who had no pastor of their own at that time (the deputizing vicar had fled), asked the Catholic priest whether they might be permitted to attend services at his church. The church was crowded with worshippers at the first Sunday service. As a kindly gesture the priest announced at the end of his sermon that the congregation would sing the Protestant hymn, "Trust in the Lord". Tears rolled down their cheeks as they all joined in the hymn... Some time afterwards a Protestant pastor, a refugee from Militsch, arrived in Primkenau. The Catholic priest placed a room at the vicarage at his disposal, and he used to hold his services on Sunday afternoons.

The hardships we endured under Russian Occupation were bad enough, but even worse was to follow. The fact that a Polish mayor was suddenly installed caused us to have grave misgivings, and, unfortunately, all our fears were realized. At about four o'clock in the morning, on June 26th, 1945, Polish militiamen suddenly appeared in the town and began turning the Germans out of their homes, beating and flogging them as they drove them out onto the streets. At about nine o'clock in the morning an endless trek of expellees set out on foot for Sprottau. We passed through numerous towns, including Sagan, Sorau, and Cottbus, on our way to Luebben in the Spreewald, which was supposed to be our destination. About eighty per cent of the buildings in Luebben had been destroyed, and there was no chance of our finding accommodation there. The trek now split up and we said goodbye to each other and set off alone, in the hopes of finding accommodation somewhere or other. The physical and mental suffering and anguish, which the rest of the journey brought with it, can probably only be realized by someone who is capable of great fellow-feeling. Those who were once my loyal friends are now scattered throughout Germany. Many of them are weary and dejected as a result of all they have suffered and endured, and many of them are now dead.

*Report No. 151***The Parish of Kaltwasser, near Lueben ²¹¹**

The parish of Kaltwasser included 405 Catholics (1942) and 4,530 persons of other denominations (1929) A parish-church (Holy Trinity) is mentioned in historical records in 1399 From 1524 onwards it was Protestant, and from 1701 to 1707 Catholic again — A Catholic chapel was founded at the castle in 1707 by Count Joh Franz Anton von Goetz and endowed by the Emperor in 1716 — The present church was built in the baroque style during the years 1794 to 1797 by the Benedictines in Wahlstatt Kaltwasser became a parish in 1817 Until 1810 it belonged to the Benedictine monastery in Wahlstatt

On February 9th, 1945, the Russians seized Kaltwasser after German troops had tried in vain, in what was a hopeless struggle, to defend it...

When the shelling ceased we ventured out of the cellar once more, but we had only got as far as the stairs when we saw Zajonc, a Pole, coming towards us with a Russian officer and another man. We hoped for the best, but the interpreter promptly demanded our watches and rings. In fact, he actually tore my watch off its chain, and made the women remove all their rings, bracelets, and necklaces. We were horrified when the Russian officer and the interpreter seized hold of Mrs. M. and my aunt and dragged them off. When they eventually came back we went to the vicarage. The house was full of Russians and they had already wrought havoc in all the rooms. Some of them had ransacked the pantry and were gorging the food they had found there. Others had opened all the drawers and cupboards and thrown the contents onto the floor. We were obliged to step over piles of debris. Russians continued to raid the house all day long. They played the mouth-organ and the harmonium and set the gramophone going. There was a bottle of pure alcohol in the house and they drained it undiluted. They swarmed into the pantry and ate all the preserves. One of them actually locked the pantry-door and took the key with him. When it grew dark they set fire to the school. We did not dare go to bed as one lot of soldiers after another kept raiding the house. We spent a dreadful night. Words fail me to describe our horrible experiences. At about three o'clock in the morning a savage-looking Russian appeared and searched us. We had already been searched innumerable times by other Russians. On this occasion my aunt was robbed of all her money. The small room in which various articles of value had been stored resembled a lumber-room. All the locks had been wrenched off the packing-cases. The only case the Russians could not manage to open was the one belonging to Family Hantke, which had been stored at the vicarage for safety and was secured with hoop-iron. As the electric light was out of order, the Russians tied two large candles together and searched all the rooms by candlelight. In the course of their search one of them opened the wardrobe and slashed all the garments to pieces with his dagger. Then he went into the small room next to M.'s room and set fire

²¹¹ s *Betraege*, Vol III, p 392 ff

to the wood-shavings. I heard a crackling sound, ran out of the room, and discovered to my horror that the small room was ablaze. I called to the others and we tried to put out the fire, but, unfortunately, there was not enough water available. The others then ran away, and I was obliged to abandon my efforts and get dressed as quickly as possible and leave the burning house.

When we got outside we saw some of the damage that had been done during the fighting in Kaltwasser. Numerous houses had been destroyed by fire and several had been shelled. We sought shelter at Mr. H.'s house which was in the same state of disorder and chaos as ours. But here, too, the Russians continued to molest us. They seized hold of Mrs. K. and took her away. Terrified of what might happen to them, our womenfolk ran out of the house and hid behind Mr. H.'s barn. Some Russian officers, who were apparently quite decent fellows, saw them and told them to go back to the house. All of a sudden the barn caught fire. We thereupon hurriedly gathered our belongings together and fled to the Protestant church. The Russians had already wrought havoc in the interior. The altar and the pulpit had been dismantled, the candelabra smashed to bits, the heads of the statues hewn off, and all the pipes pulled out of the organ. We sat in the pews, shivering with cold, until daybreak, but at least we were not molested. Mr. K. was the only one who had gone along to the church with us. Mr. H. and his family had first of all hidden in Fr.'s hay-loft and then gone to Mr. F.'s and spent the rest of the night at his house. At daybreak we were faced by the problem of where to go for shelter. The women hid behind a barn near to the church, and Mr. K. and I went along to the vicarage to see what had happened. The house had been completely destroyed by fire, and the wash-house and the outbuildings were the only parts of the premises which had not been damaged. The interior of the church was as dreadful a sight as that of the Protestant church. The tabernacle was lying on the floor, but it had not been opened. All the altars had been dismantled. The wainscoting on the front of the altars, all the banners, the confessional, and the organ had been ruined. Tanks had been driven into the garden, several fir-trees had been knocked down, and the fence had been smashed to bits.

Report No. 152

The Parish of Bunzlau ²¹²

The town of Bunzlau, capital of the district of Bunzlau, numbered 3,000 Catholics (1942) and 21,183 persons of other denominations (1929). A church (The Assumption of the Virgin Mary) is mentioned in historical records in 1261. It was demolished by the Hussites in 1427, but was rebuilt in 1441. From 1524 to 1629 it was used as a Protestant church. It was destroyed by the Swedes in 1642, but from 1690 onwards was rebuilt in the late Gothic style — Martin von Gerstmann, Primate of Breslau, was born in Bunzlau — A Dominican monastery was founded in

²¹² s. *Beitraege*, Vol II, p. 408 ff

Bunzlau in 1225 In 1554 it became the property of the Protestants, but was restored as a monastery in 1666 In 1810 it was secularized and both the monastery and the church were handed over to the Protestants — The prebend belonging to the Order of the Crusaders of the Holy Star, together with the right of advowson to Tillendorf, was sold to Bunzlau in 1569

... A soldier of the Red Army led us through the streets of Bunzlau. We were allowed to look for quarters in Opitz Street, but I managed to get away and went to the vicarage.

I was so glad to see a priest. Reverend Father Sauer gave me a brief account of the capture of Bunzlau by the Russians. There had not been much fighting as the town had surrendered after a short time. The Reverend Father then went along to the headquarters of the Russian commandant, and told the latter that he had been imprisoned by the Nazis and asked him to spare the church and the community. He also told the Russian commandant that General Kutusov, Napoleon's great enemy, had died in Bunzlau. The house in which he died was thereupon declared a Russian "shrine". In this way, Reverend Father Sauer enjoyed a certain amount of protection and was allowed to remain in Bunzlau, and was thus able to help me...

Next morning I went to St. Joseph's Convent. It was by no means safe to be out on the streets, but I prayed to the Lord to protect me as I proceeded from the vicarage to the convent, and He heard my prayers. After Holy Mass we prayed most fervently to the Heavenly Father to cast Satan and all the evil spirits in the world into Hell, and our prayers were answered, for although Russian hordes swarmed through the streets and even entered the convent we were spared.

In the evenings we all used to gather at the vicarage, and the Reverend Father would read passages from the Psalms and a description of the life of the saint whose festival was celebrated on that particular day. Then we would all say a prayer together. There was an atmosphere of soothing calm and tranquillity as we sat there in the candlelight. It was as though the vicarage were a holy citadel, which the enemy assailed again and again, but always in vain.

And the beautiful old church in Bunzlau likewise withstood all the attempts of the Russians to destroy it. The doors were forced open again and again in the course of the day, and the Reverend Father barricaded them anew countless times. On numerous occasions he prevented Russian marauders, who wanted to ransack the interior, from entering. When they set fire to the buildings near to the church and the sparks flew over onto the church-roof, the Reverend Father stood at one of the windows in the vicarage and prayed to the Lord to protect the church. His prayers were answered and the church was not damaged.

Reverend Father Sauer was indeed the guardian of the Lord's sacred temple. He was willing to risk his own life to protect and defend his church and his parishioners. Catholics and Protestants alike, the faithful and the unbelievers, all came to him to seek solace and spiritual strength. His was no easy task, for people would come to him in their dreadful

distress and anguish and tell him that their husbands had been murdered or their sons seized by the Russians. And on one occasion a woman came to him and, in a halting voice and with a dazed expression on her face, told him, "Father, I can't go on living! Thirty of them raped me last night." But despite all their sufferings, Father Sauer inspired them all with new faith, strength and courage to face life once more. — Words cannot describe the dreadful misery and anguish which the poor Silesians suffered in those days.

We had hardly been in Bunzlau a week when we were turned out once more. Before leaving, I went across to the church for the last time. During the past few days I had often read the words on the sundial, "Time flies, death comes, darkness vanishes, and light remains". I now read them for the last time and then entered the church. The severe Gothic and the more ornate baroque style are combined in the interior of the church to create a lasting impression of beauty and harmony. — As I stood there in silent contemplation, I grieved to think that we were once more forced to leave Bunzlau and I dreaded the thought of all that might befall us. But — darkness vanishes, and light remains! I was placed in charge of the Bunzlau Sisters of Charity. We were sorely grieved at having to bid farewell to Reverend Father Sauer, who was obliged to remain in Bunzlau. Tears rolled down his face as he gave us his last blessing.²¹³

Pushing small handcarts containing our belongings, we proceeded on foot along the main road till we reached Thomaswaldau. We spent the night in the children's home there, which had been ransacked by Russians. A number of persons from Herzogswaldau had just arrived, too. The interior of the church was a dreadful sight. Vestments and books lay scattered about on the floor, all the statues had been knocked over, the picture of St. Hedwig had been slashed to pieces, and the monstrance had been trampled on. The Russians had wrought complete havoc. — We all of us dreaded having to spend the night in Thomaswaldau, for the village was swarming with Russian soldiers, and parties of them kept coming into the room we were sheltering in, eyeing us and looking for victims. — Next morning, stiff with cold and worn out after the sleepless night we had spent, we set out on our journey once more. In Kaiserswaldau, which was our next halt, we talked to some people from Guentherdsdorf. They told us that they had been searching the cellars of untenanted houses for food, so as not to starve. When I asked them whether their priest was with them, they told us that he had been shot by Russian.²¹⁴ We were horrified at this news, and, later on, as we trudged along the main

²¹³ The parish-priest of Bunzlau, Archpresbyter Paul Sauer (born on September 26, 1892, ordained on June 19, 1921), died in Bunzlau on June 24, 1946. Cf next report on Thomaswaldau, and also *The Martyrdom of Silesian Priests 1945/46*, p. 77 ff

²¹⁴ The parish-priest of Guentherdsdorf, Dean Archpresbyter Christoph Arnold (born on March 15, 1892, ordained on June 13, 1915), was shot on February 21, 1945. Cf *The Martyrdom of Silesian Priests 1945/46*, p. 25 ff

road, we said a prayer for the repose of his soul. When we reached Kreibau the Russians got hold of us again and we were treated like slaves. They forced the nuns to work in the stables and even made them wash dirty, oil-stained shirts for the soldiers. The nuns were completely exhausted when they came back to the room we were sheltering in, in the evening. We all sat there huddled together in one small room and prayed that we would be spared during the night. — How we longed for the night to end! — Again and again we heard heavy footsteps approaching, and Russians came and went. At about midnight a new lot of fiends entered the room. They kicked those who had lain down on the floor in order to get a little rest; they fired shots at the ceiling, and tore the nuns' hoods off their heads. I shall never forget the terrible screams of the women and children. It was a dreadful night. After the Russians had departed we decided to flee from Kreibau as quickly as we could. We all said a prayer together and begged the Heavenly Father to protect us. Our prayers were answered and we managed to escape from Kreibau. We were obliged to pass several sentries. When we got to the first sentry I put on my most solemn manner and bowed to him most respectfully. He was so impressed that he forgot all evil intentions he might have had, and said, "You can pass!" — And so, after proceeding via Haynau, we eventually succeeded in reaching Liegnitz.

Report No. 153

The Parish of Thomaswaldau, near Bunzlau ²¹⁵

The parish of Thomaswaldau included 526 Catholics (1942) and 4,177 persons of other denominations (1929) A church (St Hedwig's) is mentioned in historical records in 1305 It was damaged by fire in 1835, but was rebuilt in 1837 — A chapel of ease at Ober-Mittlau (St Martin's) is mentioned in historical records in 1399 The present church was, for the most part, built in 1872

... It was about half-past three in the afternoon (on February 11th, 1945) by the time I succeeded in getting as far as the forester's lodge. When I arrived there I learnt that my wife had been shot. She had spent the night there, and, at about half-past ten in the morning, had gone along to our house in the hopes of finding me there. Whilst she was in the house she was molested by Russian soldiers, and she and R. then decided to seek shelter in the cellar on the estate. She returned to the house in order to collect a few of the most necessary belongings to take along to the cellar with her. Russian soldiers followed her into the house. (This is the account eyewitnesses gave me of what happened.) My wife was so agitated that she tried to flee, but the Russians kicked her in the stomach and then shot her in the head. That same day, February 11th, which was a Sunday, my daughter, her husband, mother-in-law, sister-in-

²¹⁵ s *Beitraege*, Vol II, p. 494 and p 484 ff

law, and two apprentices arrived at the forester's lodge in the hopes of finding shelter there. Things were fairly quiet during the night, but next day the Russians started looting and ransacking the lodge. They smashed all the agricultural machines and most of the furniture and crockery. They threw the beds and the mattresses out into the snow and the rain. Women and girls were raped, and we Germans were powerless to put a stop to all the atrocities which the Russians committed. During the night of February 13th, my daughter gave birth to her baby, and that same night forty Russians were billeted on the house. We Germans — there were eleven of us — were crowded into a tiny room, normally used as a sitting-room by the forester's assistant. The Russians promptly began molesting the women and girls. My daughter and her baby had also been thrust into the room with us, and it was only thanks to the intervention of a Russian woman-doctor in the house that my daughter was not molested, too. On my daughter's birthday my son-in-law, W., B., and K., and several other German men were arrested by the Russians and led off to captivity. Cattle strayed about in the fields and streets, and many of the animals died of starvation and exposure. The carcasses were left lying about. Actually we suffered most when there were no soldiers billeted in the house, for soldiers passing through the village would then enter, loot and ransack all the rooms and search the place for women and girls. On such occasions the latter would be obliged to run out of the house during the night, in the rain and snow, and hide somewhere for safety. After a while the Russians started catching the straying cattle and took it along to the estate. From February until March, 1945, German girls and women were forced to work for the Russians and had to do their washing for them in the wash-house at the castle. From April onwards, until June 13th, they made us look after the cows on the estate, and from June 13th until the middle of August we herded sheep. During the whole of the time from February 10th to August 31st, 1945, the village was full of Russian soldiers. Thousands of cars were parked in the castle grounds and in the village-streets. There was never a moment's peace and quiet...

We returned to Thomaswaldau at the beginning of August, 1945. When we reached Bunzlau we discovered that two-thirds of the town had been destroyed. All the buildings on Market Square save seven had been destroyed by fire. We visited Archpresbyter Sauer and he gave us an account of what had happened in the Bunzlau district.

The Damage in Thomaswaldau

We reached Thomaswaldau at noon next day. All the houses and farms along the main road, with the exception of one small farm, had been damaged, many of them by fire. Altogether about forty farms were completely destroyed by fire... Many of the fires had been started by patients from the mental home in Bunzlau, who had simply been left to their fate when the Russians seized the town, and had then wandered about the villages in the district.

As the vicarage was still occupied by Russians, we took up our quarters for the time being at the children's home. Most of the rooms were in a filthy condition and not fit to live in. There were a large number of aged and sick lying in the dining-hall, many of whom died in the course of time. A monk of the order of the Oblates, who had held the office of chaplain in Striegau, had also sought shelter at the children's home. He had been abducted by the Russians during the fighting in the Striegau district and had been taken to Trebnitz. From there he had proceeded to Thomaswaldau with a trek of refugees. He had had the church cleaned and had held the first service there on the Sunday before we arrived. Even so, however, the interior of the church was in a dreadful condition. Refugees had camped there and had actually used part of the church as a stable. Those of the windows which had not been damaged by exploding shells had been used as targets by the Russians. One of the six Russians living at the vicarage was a Siberian who was obviously an out-and-out atheist. Needless to say, he was feared by everyone in the village. He fired at the cross on the church-tower and smashed it; he slashed the pictures over the altars to bits, and knocked the carved wooden statues off the altars and then threw them into the crypt. Havoc had been wrought in the churchyard. Refugees had used the gates for fuel; several tombstones had been knocked over; and to this day there are still two Russian army-tractors standing in the churchyard as a souvenir of the war. The huge statue of St. Nepomuk at the entrance to the churchyard was damaged by bombs. The roof of the church was so badly damaged that it let the rain in. The steel tabernacle had been wrenched out of the altar and forced open with a crowbar.

A fortnight after our arrival in Thomaswaldau the Russians moved out of the vicarage. Before they departed, they removed most of the furniture and only left those pieces behind which were either too large to be moved or were badly damaged. The vicarage was a dreadful sight. It took us a week to clean up all the filth and rubbish and make the place fairly habitable again. Most of the windows had been smashed. A few days before the Russians departed, one of them wilfully smashed one of the window-frames to bits with a hatchet. We had to board up most of the windows... The vicarage had also suffered some slight damage as a result of machine-gun fire and shelling. Part of the garden-fence had been mown down by Russian tanks, and the rest of it had been stolen and used for fuel. There were piles of household utensils, linen, curtains, motor cycle parts, and about half the vicarage-library scattered all over the vicarage garden. As all the things were covered with mildew we had no alternative but to set fire to them. The fires in the vicarage garden smouldered for days on end. The Russians had broken open the vault underneath the vestry, had searched all the tombs and wrought such havoc that we were obliged to dig a huge grave and inter all the remains in it. One of the coffins was in good condition and we used it to bury someone who had just died. After we had managed to repair the church-windows as well as we could, we set about mending the roof, which had been partly lifted off by the force of explosions. In

the course of the following months the damage in the interior of the church was also repaired. We mended the altar-pieces and statues, and by the time we were expelled in July, 1946, the church was once more neat and tidy. The statues in the chapel of the Holy Cross were the only ones that were not repaired ...

Terrible Conditions under Polish Rule

The Polish militia consisted for the most part of former concentration camp internees and partisans, who, for years, had not been accustomed to living in a civilized world of law and order. It was therefore not surprising that atrocities, assault, looting, and drunkenness became the order of the day when the Poles took over the administration. On one occasion, for instance, Polish militiamen removed a sewing-machine from the vicarage which the Russians had allowed to remain in the house. German men, women, and girls were arrested and taken to the cellar at the Protestant vicarage, which served as the headquarters of the Polish militia, and were beaten and flogged. Some of them were taken to Bunzlau, and on their return died from the effects of the brutal treatment they had received... Until autumn, 1945, the Russians more or less ruled the village. The Germans were forced to work for them and in return for their services received bread and soup. Those who were not fit to work were obliged to starve. No ration cards were issued... It was not safe to be out on the streets. Unless they were absolutely forced to go out for some reason or other, people stayed indoors, for the Russians frequently seized people on the streets and took them off to work somewhere. It was not even safe to go to church. The Poles were particularly fond of arresting Germans who were on their way to church. On one occasion several persons who were on their way to attend the Protestant service were arrested, taken to Bunzlau on a lorry, and did not return until evening, after having gone without food all day. Practically every night burglaries and cases of rape occurred. To make matters worse, many of the Russian soldiers, who had been discharged from the army, now roamed about the countryside and lived by looting and stealing. And the fact that there were thousands of Russian soldiers stationed in the garrison in the neighbouring town of Bunzlau did not improve matters. Practically every day refugees, who were on their way to the frontier at the Neisse, passed through Thomaswaldau. Most of them had been robbed of all they possessed, and many of them were dangerously ill. There was some commotion or disturbance in the village almost every day. To complicate matters, there was no electricity supply in the village. The Russians had smashed all the transformers at the power-station and had damaged all the overhead wires, by firing shots at the insulators and sawing down the poles. The only persons in the village who had electric light at their disposal in the summer of 1946 were the Polish mayor and the Polish militia... There were some persons in the village who actually enjoyed this state of lawlessness and even joined forces with the Russians and Poles. The scandalous behaviour of some of the German women and girls caused considerable indignation.

The Great Plague

The village was ravaged by epidemics and disease, which were to some extent caused by the dreadful famine, and the death-rate was higher than it had ever been in the whole history of Thomaswaldau. In 1945, for instance, 140 burials took place. Some of these, it is true, took place in Liebichau and Mittlau, but the actual figure is considerably higher, since the burials which were held without a priest whilst the fighting was still in progress and the number of soldiers, killed in action, who were buried in the fields or trenches, have not been counted. During the second half of 1945 there were as many as 97 burials. As there was a shortage of coffins the bodies were usually wrapped in old blankets. Sometimes, old cupboards, if they were available, were used instead of coffins. Two or three and sometimes four bodies were usually buried one on top of another in one grave. Incidentally, the Catholic priest also officiated at Protestant funerals. Prior to the end of November, 1945, there were only two or three Protestant clergymen in the entire Bunzlau district. For this reason the Catholic priest offered to officiate at Protestant funerals. The Protestant inhabitants were extremely grateful to him, and his action undoubtedly strengthened the unity of the German population... The fact that the Catholic priests in Thomaswaldau, Bunzlau, Birkenbrueck, Gross-Hartmannsdorf, and numerous other villages and towns took care of the Protestants brought about a most noticeable reconciliation between the two faiths. Unfortunately, however, the unchristianlike behaviour of the Poles towards the Germans caused many of the Protestants to become prejudiced against the Catholic Church. At first, many Protestants had attended the Catholic services, but they promptly ceased to do so when Poles, who had robbed and beaten Germans, started coming to the services. One could not help but notice that the pious attitude adopted by the Poles when they attended church on Sundays was very different from the unchristianlike manner in which they treated others, especially all those who were not Poles. It was therefore hardly surprising that most of the Germans regarded the Poles as hypocrites. Many of the Poles simply refused to believe that a German was capable of being a devout Catholic, too. Incidentally, the new atheism professed by many Germans seriously undermined the prestige of the German nation in the eyes of the Poles. The Poles and the Russians had a mania for drinking, and many of the atrocities which occurred were committed whilst they were under the influence of alcohol. Mrs. D., for instance, was killed by drunken Russians a few months after her daughter had been murdered by Russians. The priest officiated at the funeral of a woman in Ober-Mittlau who had been killed by a Russian, who fired eight shots at her. The same Russian then raped her daughter immediately afterwards...

The Influx of the Poles

The influx of Polish civilians from Galicia, in particular from the Lemberg district, began in the autumn of 1945. These Poles had been forced to leave their native towns and villages by the Russians and Ukrai-

nians. They told us that dreadful atrocities had been committed in Galicia... They drove into the village on small carts, drawn by ponies and containing all their belongings: then they set about looking for farms to their liking. They usually chose farms with about twenty, thirty or forty acres of land. They moved in as the owners, and the Germans were now forced to work on their own farms as labourers for the Poles...

At the end of April or beginning of May, 1948, Archpresbyter Sauer of Bunzlau was arrested by the Poles and held in custody for about six weeks, finally dying of exhaustion on June 24th, 1946. He was accused of having been a member of a secret German resistance movement. He had incurred the enmity of the Polish militia by trying to intervene when they attempted to seize the convent belonging to the Sisters of Charity in Bunzlau, in order to make it their headquarters. The Poles would not allow the time of his funeral to be made known, nor would they permit any of the clergymen of the district, with the exception of Father L., to attend. He was then buried at nightfall, at half-past eight in the evening...

The Expulsion of the Germans

In order to exploit the Germans as long as possible the Polish mayor and the militia told them, in the course of several special meetings which were held, that there was no likelihood of their being expelled, a statement which, unfortunately, was believed by many of the inhabitants. At about nine o'clock one evening in June, 1946, we learnt that the Germans were to be expelled next morning. The consternation of the inhabitants may be imagined, for many of them had been hoping they would be allowed to stay in their native village... A list of the names of the expellees was made by Polish militiamen and the trek then set off. Some of the expellees proceeded on foot, pushing small handcarts containing their belongings, whilst others were given a lift by some of the Poles, on farm-carts. The expellees numbered about five hundred persons. Only a few families remained in the village, — those who were employed by the Poles and still hoped conditions would some day improve. After trudging along for one and a half hours, we arrived in Bunzlau and were sent along to H.'s pottery works which served as a collecting point for expellees... We were then searched, or, to be more correct, robbed by Polish customs officials, who seized all articles in our possession which were comparatively new and also deprived us of all sums of money, Polish and German, in excess of 500 Reichsmarks.

After a journey which took three days, we arrived in Alfeld, in the province of Hanover. The members of the parish of Thomaswaldau are now scattered throughout Germany. Some of them went to Bavaria in the spring of 1945, that is to say, they were sent to Bavaria from the Sudetenland. Others, who crossed the frontier illegally, have meanwhile settled down in Westphalia and in other districts in the British Occupied Zone of Germany. Most of them, however, are now living in the districts of Northeim, Kreiensen, Alfeld, and Hanover.

*Report No 154***The Parish of Lauban**²¹⁶

The town of Lauban, capital of the district of Lauban, had a population of 3,338 Catholics (1942) and 19,826 persons of other denominations (1929). A parish-church (Holy Trinity) is mentioned in historical records in 1320. It was rebuilt in 1473 and from the middle of the sixteenth century onwards was used as a Protestant church. In 1760 it was destroyed by fire and, with the exception of the tower, was completely razed to the ground. — The convent church (St Anna's) was rebuilt in 1769 after having been destroyed by fire, and for a considerable time it served as the Catholic parish-church. The present Catholic church (Holy Trinity) was built in the Gothic style during the years 1857 to 1860.

Middle of January, 1945... Treks of refugees from the villages of Silesia are passing through Lauban in a never-ending stream. Some of the covered wagons are driven by old farmers who from time to time urge their horses or their oxen forward. — There is a little boy walking behind one of the wagons. He waves to his little sisters and brothers sitting in the back of the wagon, but when he notices the grave expression on his mother's and grandmother's faces his smile vanishes. His grandmother is sitting on a bundle of straw at the back of the wagon. With eyes dimmed with age she gazes out across the countryside in the direction from which they have come. In the distance, behind the Queis and the wooded slopes of the Kreuzberg, lies the village where she was born, — the farm where she spent the happy days of her youth, the church where she used to kneel in prayer, and the cemetery with the graves of her dear ones... She had always wanted to be laid to rest in the shade of the ancient trees in the village churchyard which sang a gentle lullaby when the wind sighed in their branches. All the friends of her youth lie buried there... She is the only one left... She would rather have stayed behind in her native village when everyone else fled, but her family insisted on her going with them. She little dreamt she would be forced to leave her native village in her old age...

Thousands of refugees have already passed through the town, but the streets are still blocked with endless treks. As one trek moves on, others follow. The weather is bitterly cold and snow-storms sweep the countryside. A little child is sitting in one of the wagons, weeping as though its heart would break... God alone can comfort these poor souls.

February 11th, 1945. In the evening I climbed up onto the roof of the church and gazed at the countryside around me. Without being a prophet I realized that disaster was about to overtake us, — a terrible disaster, for the heathens were rapidly approaching. I could see the reflection of a fire on the horizon. It seemed to be moving, and I therefore assumed that the Russians had already advanced beyond Liegnitz. It was as though a wind of destruction and desolation swept the countryside.

²¹⁶ s. *Beutraege*, Vol II, p. 397 ff

All remained quiet during the night, but next day one rumour after another spread through the town and the inhabitants were at a loss as to what to believe and what to do. It was even rumoured that Liegnitz had been recaptured by German troops and that Lauban was therefore no longer in danger of being seized by the Russians...

On Tuesday, February 13th, 1945, orders were issued that Lauban was to be evacuated. The inhabitants hastily gathered a few of their belongings together and fled as fast as they could. I was one of those who remained behind. I felt intuitively that a dreadful disaster was about to overtake us; what exactly it was I knew not, but I realized that this time of suffering and misery, like all times, would pass, though there would be many who would not survive.

That same evening I climbed up onto the roof of the church once more. It was as though there were a sinister warning in the very air. The whole sky was ablaze and the air seemed to vibrate with the rumble of the Soviet tanks, as they came nearer and nearer. Apparently they were preparing to launch a large-scale attack. But despite all this, I went to bed and slept soundly and peacefully — for the last time.

As the Reverend Father wanted to fetch all the aged and the sick in the neighbourhood along to our cellar, which was comparatively large and safe, we set out at once with wheelchairs and handcarts.

Unsuspectingly, we proceeded down the Promenade. When we had gone about half-way and were just passing the old town-walls we suddenly heard a deafening crash. Bombs and shells exploded all around us and splinters whizzed past our heads. We threw ourselves flat on the ground and then crawled on all fours towards the low wall which runs along the old Lauban Brook. It was as though all the forces of hell had been let loose in order to destroy the town. The air vibrated with the deadly thunder, rumble, and hiss of bombs and shells. We were paralysed with fear. What were we to do? Was this the end?

Shell upon shell hit the buildings, gardens, and streets close by. "We can't get back to the cellar. We'll have to try to get to Goerlitz Street, away from the shelling," I shouted to the nuns. "I'm not coming with you. I'm going back," replied Sister Johanna-Franziska. Just as she said this, we all jumped up from the ground in order to seek shelter elsewhere. She ran back in the direction from which we had come, and Sister Nicolaja ran off in the direction of Post Street.

The shelling grew fiercer. Pieces of glass and bricks whizzed through the air and fell onto the streets. Some of the houses caught fire, and flames shot up amidst dense clouds of black smoke. We managed to get as far as the Protestant cemetery, which had likewise been hit by several shells. To my horror, I discovered that we were no better off here than we had been before, for a fresh volley of shells descended. We crawled along between the tombstones. Bombs and shells exploded with a deafening crash. The ground trembled under the violent impact of shells. We crouched down behind the tombstones whilst this inferno raged all around us. All of a sudden, enemy planes appeared over the town and began to

launch an attack. To protect ourselves in case they started firing their machine-guns we covered ourselves with the wreaths which lay on some of the graves. The ground was frozen hard and our hands and feet gradually became numb with cold as we lay there. We prayed to the Heavenly Father to protect us and I said the absolution. And as I prayed, the words of Theodor Koerner's poem, "Father I cry to Thee! Cannon thunder around me!", which I had read so often, became my prayer, too. An hour later the shelling gradually grew less, and we decided to leave the cemetery and return to the convent cellar, for we were filled with anxiety lest the church and the convent might have been destroyed. And we dreaded to think that the Russians had perhaps already entered the town.

We managed to get back to the convent cellar without mishap, and those who were sheltering there were overjoyed to see that we were still alive. — I then learnt that considerable damage had been caused by a heavy bomb. Karl Seidel, our verger, had been seriously injured and was lying on a camp-bed in the cellar. Sister Nicolaja and Sister Johanna-Franziska had not yet returned. On hearing this, I was greatly alarmed and hurried outside. When I reached the Promenade I saw a huddled form lying in the middle of the road, some distance away. It was Sister Johanna-Franziska. She was dead. A shell splinter had lacerated her head. There was a look of terror and rigidity on her face, as though she already belonged to another world. The horror of this world had touched her, but it had failed to vanquish her. She had been called to her heavenly home as she was on her way to perform one of her many deeds of kindness.

I managed to lift her onto the wheelchair and began pushing it up the slope of the Promenade, but I no longer had sufficient strength. As I was struggling with my burden, a soldier came running up and asked me in an agitated voice if I knew how far the Russians had got. I told him I did not know and asked him to help me to push the wheelchair up the hill, but he ran off as fast as he could... So I went back to the cellar and told them what had happened to Sister Johanna-Franziska. Everyone was moved to tears on hearing of the death of this young nun, who was so kind and good. — It was very hard for me to break the sad news to her parents. — In the afternoon we managed to get out and brought her body back to the convent. We buried her in the convent garden next evening.

February 26th, 1945. As the Russians had almost advanced as far as the convent in the course of the fighting, the Reverend Father sent a letter to the commander of the German forces and requested that the convent should be regarded as neutral territory and excluded from hostilities. He received a reply to the effect that the convent was to be evacuated that night! — That afternoon the Russian units that had advanced as far as Nicolai Square were repulsed and there was a short lull in the fighting... During the night we moved all the aged and sick to Naumburg Street, where they were then put on German army lorries which took them to Lichtenau. It was about three o'clock in the morning

by the time we had finished moving all the aged and sick and I said goodbye to the Reverend Father and the nuns. Their farewell words were, "Don't be long in joining us!"... But things turned out quite different...

When I returned to the cellar in order to pack up my belongings, those who had not been able to leave and had now decided to stay in the cellar begged me not to depart. I had not expected a request of this kind. I felt I wanted to leave all the misery in Lauban and join the Reverend Father, the nuns, and the rest of the parishioners, but, on the other hand, something restrained me from doing so, and as I sought to reach a decision I suddenly thought of the words, "The shepherd must stay with his flock". And I knew my mind was made up. — I vowed to stay with the people of Lauban to the bitter end.

I was surprised to find all of them (there were about fifty persons) still sitting crowded together in one of the small cellars. The fighting had meanwhile been resumed. Shells and artillery fire rent the air and the concentrated fire of the tanks grew fiercer and fiercer. The thunder of the cannon which continued without a pause was deafening. There was a stifling smell of sulphur. Hand and rifle grenades caused considerable damage. Somehow I managed to get back to the convent. Some of the soldiers from the dug-outs along the railway embankment came to the convent and were very disappointed when they learnt that all the nuns had left. They had got into the way of coming to the convent every day for medical treatment and help, and were always very glad to have a little chat with the kindly nuns. — Rudolf Hinkelmann now helped bandage the wounded, and I went along with some of the soldiers to bury the dead.

On Wednesday, February 28th, 1945, the fighting was fiercer than ever. The tower of the parish-church was hit and there was a deafening crash as it collapsed. — About noon some German soldiers came to the convent and told us that the Russians were likely to arrive in about an hour's time. We thereupon moved into the large cellar which had been used by the nuns before they left. The hour in which our fate would be decided was now rapidly approaching and we dreaded to think of what the Russians might do to us.

The tumult and commotion overhead grew louder and louder. We could hear soldiers tramping about overhead, but we could not tell whether they were Germans or Russians. And the same unspoken prayer, "Lord deliver us from this evil", was in every heart... All of a sudden, we noticed a pungent smell of burning in the cellar — — I rushed out of the cellar and discovered to my horror that the whole convent was on fire. Flames were leaping up from the windows to the roof and the fire was also rapidly spreading downwards. The smoke was suffocating. I rushed back into the cellar and told the others that we must get out as quickly as we could because the whole building was on fire. They gazed at me in horror. — But before we had a chance to get out of the cellar the first lot of Russians appeared. They stood at the entrance to the cellar and were obviously very surprised to find human creatures

down here. They soon disappeared again, however. They did not look as bad as we had expected and most of us were rather relieved. But after a short while a whole horde of Asiatic-looking fellows appeared and started searching the cellar. One of them then said to me, "Come on!" I gave Mrs. Winkelmann of Liegnitz the farewell-letter I had written to my mother and then followed the Russian out of the cellar. When we got outside he raised the safety-bolt on his gun and then said, "Watch!" I handed him my watch and he dragged me back into the cellar again. The Russians now ransacked the cellar and soon made havoc of what had been a fairly habitable and tidy room. The place was a dreadful sight by the time they had finished. The room was already full of smoke and I begged one of the Russians to let us out, but he bawled at me, "You here spatch — here sleep, in morning come out!" — Were they going to let us be burnt to death? After a while, however, a more civilized-looking Russian appeared and I repeated my request. He led us out to the Alms Gate and then took us into the courtyard of the convent. The noise was deafening — the raucous shouts of the Russians, the crackling of the flames, the crashing of beams and brickwork. — We were then taken through the cloisters and into the church. The interior was a picture of desolation and destruction. The vaulting over the organ had collapsed. The nave had been hit by shells and the pews at the back of the church had all been smashed.

Wrapped in blankets, we walked along Naumburg Street, which was now a mass of ruins, past Russian tanks, and out of the main fighting line. Savage-looking Russians thronged the streets we passed through. Everything reminded us of the fact that we had lost all we possessed. We were taken to the estate belonging to the convent at Wuenschendorf and locked up in the cellar. A Russian stood on guard outside the door. We were now prisoners of the Red Army. — A period of dreadful suffering and hardship now began. Atrocities, acts of terrorism, abductions, and murder were the order of the day in the districts behind the fighting front. — When we arrived in Wuenschendorf three of the women in our group were promptly seized by Russians and dragged outside, allegedly for the purpose of checking their identity papers. It was heart-breaking to see the children, screaming with terror, trying to protect their mother from being molested, but it was of no avail. The Russians pushed us back and threatened us with their rifles. Two of the women eventually returned and, sobbing heart-brokenly, told me what had happened. Full of anxiety, we waited for Mrs. Elisabeth Hofmann to return, but she never came. All of a sudden, a Russian soldier entered the cellar and told us to get out. Mr. and Mrs. Sch. and their little boy, Michael, remained behind. They were going to follow on to Haugsdorf as soon as they succeeded in finding their daughter. We then spent a dreadful night and came to the conclusion that the sooner we got out of this inferno, the better. Before the break of day we silently crept from the house whilst the Russian soldier who was supposed to be guarding us was still sleeping off his drunkenness in one of the rooms upstairs. We

made for the forest as fast as we could, choosing hidden paths and lanes. In the distance we could see Lauban, where the fighting was apparently still in progress. The sky was lit by the flash of shells and the rumble of the cannon sounded like distant thunder. Thank goodness, we were out of the main fighting line, and I was very relieved when we finally reached Haugsdorf Woods, which seemed like a haven of safety and protection. The ground was covered with a soft carpet of leaves, the sky above us was grey, and the light in the forest was dim. We had intended joining the German lines somewhere between Hennersdorf and Guentersdorf, but, unfortunately, we took the wrong path in the woods and were caught by Russians, who promptly locked us up in a cellar again. One of them told me that persons caught in the woods were regarded as partisans and shot.

After we had been in the cellar for some time we were each of us taken upstairs in turn and interrogated. I tried to convince one of the Russians, who looked rather more European than the rest, that we were all quite harmless civilians. He eventually admitted that I could not very well be a partisan as I was wearing a soutane. It was one that belonged to Prelate Dr. N., which, since I had lost my own, I had donned so that the Russians would know that I was a priest. The red buttons and braid and the red colour of the soutane seemed to please the Russian officer so much that he finally became quite amiable, and, after we had all been interrogated and searched, actually allowed us to spend the night in a room upstairs in the house. During the night there was a terrible storm. The wind howled in the trees and snow and hail swept across the countryside. We sat there in silence, listening to the tempest. It was as though all the forces of Nature had been let loose. None of the Russians were likely to venture outside in this kind of weather, and so we felt comparatively safe for the night, at least. I sat down on the floor and stared into the flickering fire in the little iron stove. I felt so depressed and unnerved that I think it would have been a relief if I could have wept. — Next morning, we set out for Naumburg quite hopefully since we now had a Russian permit, which the Russian officer who had interrogated us had given us, but when we reached Ullersdorf Russian sentries stopped us at the entrance to the village. We showed them our permit and told them that the Russian commandant had given us permission to proceed to Liegnitz. One of the sentries thereupon replied, "No commandant! Me commandant!" We were then arrested and they took us to the big camp at Schlesisch-Haugsdorf. As we trudged along the highway on our way to the camp, German reconnaissance planes flew over us. They still enjoyed the freedom of the rosy-hued morning-sky, but we were once more captives. We passed through Ullersdorf, which was completely deserted. We came to a wayside crucifix and it seemed to me like an admonition from Heaven to cast sadness and apathy out of my heart. I paused for a moment to read the words inscribed at the foot of the crucifix, "Christian, do not pass by without a prayer to Him Whose Image you see here. — It is finished." This wayside crucifix

seemed to give all of us new hope and courage. We eventually reached the camp. A number of people from Kerzdorf Street in Lauban were also brought to the camp whilst we were there, and they told us about the dreadful experiences they had had.

The night we spent at the camp was dreadful. All night long Russians came and flashed their torches in our faces. Women screamed, children cried, shots were fired. One of the Russians seized hold of me and was about to drag me outside, but old Mr. Ritter, who also came from Lauban, intervened so energetically that the Russian let me go. He threatened to "finish me off" next day; but next day the Russians were too concerned with their own affairs to bother about us. Apparently they had heard bad news from Lauban, for they beat a hasty retreat and sent us to Naumburg. Mrs. Winkelmann and her son, who had been in our group, had been locked up at the house of the commanding officer, and we were obliged to set off without them. On the way to Naumburg we saw corpses, carcasses of horses, abandoned cars, and clothing lying by the wayside. The beautiful old town of Naumburg was a picture of destruction and desolation. Most of the inhabitants had fled. When we reached the Square we were once more arrested by Russians, who took us along to the house occupied by the Russian commanding officer and locked us up. Grinning maliciously, one of the sentries said to me, "You robotta — Siberia!"

Mr. Tschorn, who belonged to our group, was then taken outside and interrogated. Whilst he was being interrogated I began to worry about what would happen to me if they took me to Siberia. It was true that persons who had been banished to Siberia had sometimes returned, but they had been sadly changed and had grown old and taciturn... And suddenly I remembered the words of St. Chrysostom, who, when he was sent into exile, said, "Wherever I may be, Heaven will always be over me, and my Heavenly Father, Who created me, will always watch over me in sorrow and trouble and will love and comfort me."

Much to my surprise, the Russians released us after a short time, and we were told to proceed in the direction of Bunzlau. — We trudged along the highway. One Russian lorry after another rushed by on its way to the front. — The only faces we saw were those of Asiatics. It was as though all the Germans had vanished. There was something sinister about our native country. The names of the streets had even been changed and Russian signs had been put up. — Trembling with cold, we trudged along in a snow-storm. Shortly after passing through Birkenbrueck, we came across a German fighter plane that had been shot down. The body of the pilot was lying by the side of the road. He had apparently been dead some time.

In the evening we sought shelter in a deserted house. — My knee-joints were beginning to swell and ache with rheumatism. That night I dreamt I heard the beautiful, sacred anthem by Palestrina which we used to sing at the College of Music when I was a boy. And I heard those comforting words, "O Death Divine, eternal life shall follow. Thine

eyes shall close, to see more clearly in those pure and heavenly spheres where dwells eternal peace and rest!..."

Next morning we set out for Bunzlau. Shortly before we reached the bridge across the Bober in Tillendorf the Russians got hold of us once more and locked us up!... There were a lot of other people in the cell with us, — comrades in misfortune... They were sad and despondent, and their faces were pale and emaciated. — Dreadful and indescribable things happen in this world, for man in his godlessness and cruelty is capable of committing terrible atrocities...

The hours passed, full of misery and suffering. We were tired and hungry, and I dreaded to think what had happened to those who had got separated from our little group. All of a sudden, the door opened and in came Mrs. Winkelmann and her son. The Lord had protected her and brought her back to us safely. Her husband wept for joy...

On the way back to Lauban I passed the house in Naumburg where three clergymen (Archpresbyter Rust²¹⁷, parish-priest of Lueben, Father Habernoll²¹⁸, retired, of Altwarthau, and Father Norbert²¹⁹, of Ettal Abbey), several nuns, and about sixty men and women of Naumburg were murdered on March 2nd, 1945.

The number of atrocities continued to increase. The new rulers were obsessed by an evil desire to subjugate those whom they had conquered, by beating and tormenting them to death...

In the meantime, the Poles had settled in Lauban. Every day the parishioners would come to me and recount their sad experiences. They bore their sufferings bravely. One morning, the head of the Third Order came to see me and told me that he had been arrested in the street for calling out "Good morning" to a man whom he knew, who was just being led away by the militia. The militiamen had thereupon arrested him and taken him along to the cellar at militia headquarters. There they had then given him thirty strokes with their rubber cudgels on the soles of his bare feet. He related all this to me without a trace of bitterness or hatred in his voice. Suddenly, he said in a humble voice, "Now I know what Christ must have suffered when they scourged him..."²²⁰

²¹⁷ For details regarding the death of Archpresbyter Rust cf *The Martyrdom of Silesian Priests 1945/46*, pp 74-75

²¹⁸ For details regarding the death of Father Habernoll cf *The Martyrdom of Silesian Priests 1945/46*, pp 45-47

²¹⁹ For details regarding the death of Father Norbert Sobel cf *The Martyrdom of Silesian Priests 1945/46*, pp. 104-105

²²⁰ Cf also *Laubaner Gemeindebriefe*, edited by Dr Piekorz, and Fr. Bertram, *Chronik der Sechsstadt Lauban*, supplement to *Laubaner Gemeindebriefe*, 1951.

*Report No. 155***The Parish of Hennersdorf, near Lauban**²²¹

The parish of Hennersdorf included 1,470 Catholics (1942) and 225 persons of other denominations (1929). A church (St Nicholas') is mentioned in historical records in 1346. Various additions in the baroque style were made to the present church in 1696.

On Sunday, February 9th, 1945, the inhabitants of Hennersdorf were extremely alarmed to hear that the Russians had captured Liegnitz and that Russian spearheads had advanced as far as Bunzlau, where fierce combats were said to be in progress. On Sunday, all the political leaders in Hennersdorf were summoned to a meeting in Lauban. They returned with the reassuring news that Hennersdorf was not to be evacuated. At five o'clock on the Monday morning, however, I received orders to instruct all the people living in my area that they were to evacuate the village and be ready to leave by six o'clock. Many of them got into a panic, whilst others firmly declared that they were not going to leave. I had already made my own plans some time previously and, together with my family, intended to flee into the forest, where we were going to hide in the ravines. My neighbour, Mr. K. St., and I, therefore, hurried to the forest in order to build a shelter for our families. When we got to the spot that I had previously picked out we found three other men from Hennersdorf already at work there, engaged in building a makeshift shelter. It was not long before a lot more villagers arrived on the scene, and by the time we had finished, there were about seventy of us altogether, all living in makeshift sheds, like gipsies. There were several other camps of this kind a short distance away from where we were. I should say there were about two hundred villagers from Hennersdorf hiding in the forest... Some German soldiers, who were fleeing from the Russians, came past the camp one day and advised us to clear off as quickly as we could, as the Russians were approaching. They gave us a dreadful account of some of the atrocities committed by the Russians. We, however, were convinced that nothing could now bring the Russian offensive to a standstill and that the enemy would continue to advance along the main roads between Bunzlau and Goerlitz, or rather, between Lauban and Goerlitz, without encountering any resistance. But things turned out quite different. The offensive actually came to a standstill in the mountains and forests in our district, and we were caught between the German and the Russian lines. There were a lot of children in the camp and they made so much noise that one fine day the Russians discovered our hiding-place. Apart from searching the camp and making all the younger men show them their identity papers, they did us no harm. From then onwards, however, Russians came to the camp every day and some of them raped the girls...

On February 20th, Russian tanks launched an attack on Hennersdorf. We were moved to tears as we stood at the edge of the forest and watched

²²¹ s. *Beitraege*, Vol II, p. 363 ff.

our church burn down. The noise of the cannon and the explosions was deafening... Life in the camp soon became unbearable. Day and night, German and Russian shells whizzed through the air and some of them came down quite near to the camp. The Russians grew bolder and bolder and were constantly swarming into the camp, molesting us and raping the womenfolk. The only Russian who appeared to be decent was a Cossack officer, who on various occasions protected us and drove away numerous Russians, who had come to the camp with the intention of raping the women. On March 2nd, a Russian patrol, consisting of four men, suddenly appeared at the camp and told us that we had to leave and go to Guentersdorf. We hurriedly collected our belongings and set off, dragging our small handcarts as best as we could through the muddy lanes. Some of the families remained behind at the camp. Several of the men hid in the game-preserves. Unfortunately, they allowed themselves to be persuaded by Farmer L., who, incidentally, had concealed a number of firearms in the hay. On March 3rd, 1945, the Russians rounded up all the men they could get hold of and shot thirteen men from the village of Hengersdorf, namely the following: Farmer Otto Beyer, his father-in-law, Otto Kosmas, Georg Muessiggang, Bruno Lehmann, Paul Brendler, Bruno Weinhold, all of whom were farmers, Richter, the scissor-grinder, Heinrich Junge, a labourer, sixteen-year old Helmuth Junge, Paul Heidrichs, a bricklayer, Winkler, a bricklayer, his father, Otto Winkler, and an old man from Hamburg, who was a relative of Mr. B., the chauffeur. One day, after my return from captivity, as I was looking for mushrooms, I came across the grave in which they had been buried, and I later took their wives to the spot. Some time afterwards their bodies were exhumed and buried in the village churchyard... For the time being, the Russians let the older men alone. Our group was given accommodation in a house in Guentersdorf. At night, we were constantly molested by Russians and the women were raped... We later managed to find accommodation in two houses in Tillendorf. During the day we got on quite well with the Russians, but as soon as it grew dark the women and girls were obliged to hide so as not to be molested by the soldiers. We found plenty of food supplies in the cellars, and lived in hopes of being able to remain in Tillendorf until the war was over. On March 20th, 1945, however, we received orders from the Russian commanding officer to move on to Haynau. When we reached the market square in Bunzlau, D., St., and I were arrested and taken along to OGPU headquarters, where they first of all emptied all our pockets. When they interrogated me I told them the truth, namely that I was a teacher by profession and had never been a member of the National Socialist Party. Two Russian officers then started beating me until my back was raw. It was months till the wounds on my buttocks healed and I was free from pain. A chauffeur from Naumburg, Mr. F., who acted as a spy for the Russians, recognized me and finally saved me by testifying that I was an anti-Fascist. I was sentenced to "rabotta" (work) and was taken to the prison-camp at Reisig. After an exhausting journey on foot, via Luebern and Steinau, I was then taken to the

prison in Wohlau. There were four to eight men in each of the cells, which were actually only single cells. Many of the prisoners died of dysentery and skin diseases. They were buried in a field adjoining the prison-walls. No cross nor mound marked the spot where they were interred. Fellow-prisoners buried them, and, before doing so, robbed the dead of their belongings, which they then bartered for tobacco and food. For hours on end, I gazed longingly out of the window of the cell and watched countless herds of cattle, the natural wealth of Silesia, being driven off towards the east. We were frequently taken to Trachenberg in order to load agricultural machines and implements onto lorries prior to their being taken eastwards. Shortly before I arrived in Wohlau Chaplain K., whom I later met again in Hennersdorf, had been released from captivity. After we had been in the prison at Wohlau for twelve weeks we were taken to the camp at Dyhernfurth, where we were obliged to spend eight days out in the open, despite the fact that it poured with rain most of the time. From Dyhernfurth we were taken to Hundsfield, via Breslau. It was the most strenuous journey on foot I have ever experienced. Five of the men in my group died on the way. When we reached Breslau some of the inhabitants wanted to give us a drink of water, but the Russians would not allow them to do so and beat them with their cudgels. My feet were so sore that it took weeks before they healed. Most of us were pining to be with our families again. Completely emaciated and looking like an old man of seventy, I was eventually released and returned to Hennersdorf on September 7th, 1945, and was extremely relieved and happy to find most of my family there. They, too, in the meantime had suffered great hardships in Gross-Krausche, Thomaswaldau, and Martinswaldau. On the return journey to Hennersdorf, Mrs. Ida Hausknecht had been shot in Guenthersdorf...

Most of the inhabitants of Hennersdorf were eager to repair all the damage that had been done, and had just begun to devote themselves to the task of reconstruction when, like a bolt from the blue, the Poles expelled the first lot of Germans during the night of June 22nd, 1945. The Polish soldiers behaved in an utterly savage and brutal manner. They even beat elderly women with the butt-ends of their rifles. Many of the expellees were so terrified that they lost the belongings they had hastily gathered together, on their way out of the village... The serious shortage of food in Goerlitz had disastrous results. There were no ration cards to be had, and a large percentage of the small children in Hennersdorf died of starvation.

About seventy inhabitants of our village were shot by the Russians. One hundred and fifty houses were destroyed by fire, and, in addition, many of the young men of the village were abducted.

The Lord protected and helped me in my greatest need and distress. Life has indeed convinced me of the truth of the words in "Dreizehn Linden". Mindful of the words of wisdom of the prior in this work, namely that a true understanding of life is the heritage, not of the wise, but of the godly, and that a revelation of God's ways comes to man not by thought

alone, but by prayer, I feel that I can face the future with courage and confidence. And so I close with the words of David in Psalm XXXVII, "Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass."

Report No. 156

The Parish of Hennersdorf, near Lauban ²²²

February 12th, 1945. At five o'clock in the morning, on the Monday before Shrove Tuesday, orders were suddenly issued that the village was to be evacuated. On the day before, we had prayed for twelve hours and had been confident that the Lord would protect us. The last anthem we had all sung in church had been the *Te Deum*. Early in the morning, on February 12th, an endless row of wagons, all loaded to the full, stood lined up in the village, ready to depart for Lauban. All the wealthier inhabitants and the Party functionaries left Hennersdorf. The poorer classes remained behind and flocked together, seeking comfort and strength with the church and their priest and trusting in the Lord...

So far, we had hardly felt the effects of the war. On February 20th, 1945, the German forces suddenly retreated and we were left in no man's land. We realized that the situation had now become serious. Hennersdorf had been abandoned and we were now at the mercy of the enemy. German artillery continued to fire over the village at the advancing Russian troops. In spite of this, however, we continued to hold a service every day. On Tuesday morning, February 19th, whilst we were celebrating early mass, a German officer set up a look-out post in the church-tower and his men fixed up a telephone. At half-past nine that same morning, after enemy reconnaissance planes had previously flown over the village, the enemy started shelling Hennersdorf, in particular the central part of the village in the vicinity of the church. The priest hurried to the church in order to rescue the Consecrated Host; then he took the holy sacrament to Mrs. B., who lived at the upper end of the village and was seriously ill; despite the fact that shells were coming down without a pause, he managed to get back safely to the vicarage cellar, where a number of persons, who had been out on the street when the shelling began, had already taken shelter... The roofs of the vicarage, the church, and the barn adjoining the vicarage were badly damaged, and the tower of the church was hit by a shell. Soon afterwards, the tower caught fire. As the shelling lasted all afternoon, it was too dangerous for anyone to venture out of the vicarage cellar and climb up into the tower in order to try and extinguish the fire. Between the centre tower and the belfry there was a concrete floor and an iron door. If the picket who had been on the look-out post had closed this door when he left the tower, the fire would not have spread beyond the tower, and the church would not have burnt down. It was thus due to this act of negligence that the church was completely destroyed during the night

²²² s. *Beitraege*, Vol I, p 188 ff

from February 19th to 20th. The fire smouldered until the Wednesday afternoon, and by that time all that remained of the church was a heap of ruins and debris.

On February 25th, 1945, the first lot of Russian tanks entered the village and proceeded slowly and cautiously along the main street. We trembled with fear as we saw the first lot of Russian soldiers coming towards the house. The front door was open and they stepped inside, levelling their revolvers at us. We put our hands up in a gesture of surrender and shouted, "All civilians!" It was an easy victory for the enemy! The Russians then searched us to make sure that we had no firearms. After that they searched all the rooms in case there might be some German soldiers in hiding; then they had a drink of water, and hurried out into the street once more. We were extremely relieved and also surprised that things had gone off so smoothly. But our joy was somewhat premature. In the course of the day, the second and third lines arrived in the village. Parties of Russian soldiers came to the house, but they behaved in quite an orderly manner. They were quite friendly and joked with us, and we gave them food and drink. In the evening, however, they began molesting us. They deprived us of our candles and lamps. In addition, there was a lot of shooting going on outside in the street. One group of Russians after another raided the house and searched us for firearms and robbed us of our watches and other valuables. Girls and young women were taken along to the headquarters of the commanding officer, allegedly so that their identity papers could be checked. We spent a terrible night. When the girls and women returned and told us what had happened to them, all friendly feelings we had at first entertained towards the Russians rapidly vanished. Nevertheless, we still hoped that conditions would improve next day when the fighting troops moved on. Unfortunately, however, the Russian troops did not succeed in getting away from the village as easily as they had expected. Every morning their tanks set off in a long column in order to engage with the German forces, but in the evening many of them failed to return. They were either destroyed by "panzerfausts" (anti-tank projectile used in close combat) or stranded in the swampy terrain. The road to Schreibersdorf and Lauban was littered with burnt-out Russian tanks.

Meanwhile, whole hordes of youthful marauders raided the houses in the village and robbed, tortured, and raped the inhabitants in a most brutal manner... The niece of Mother Superior D., who was sheltering in the cellar at the vicarage, was taken to the headquarters of the commanding officer on some pretext or other and was then raped in the post-office. Every night, the Russians celebrated wild orgies in the kitchen at the vicarage and turned it into a brothel. They made the priest hand over all the sacramental wine and threatened to shoot him if he refused to comply with their request. They threw some of the furniture out of the windows, and molested us in a disgusting manner at all hours of the day. On the third day, they drove us out of the cellar, locked us up in the dining-room for about two hours, and then proceeded to search the cellar for valuables. They stole all our clothes, gold and silver valuables,

material, fountain-pens, a typewriter, and countless other odds and ends. They scattered all the money and the bank-books they found, all over the cellar and soiled everything in a disgusting way. The only things they did not damage were the sacred vessels and the pictures and statues of saints. The cellar and the rest of the rooms in the house were in an indescribable state of confusion and chaos by the time they had finished looting. Owing to the fact that it was dark, we were unable to sort out and find our own personal belongings again. During these dreadful nights we also suffered a great deal as a result of the air-raids which German planes carried out, in the hopes of annihilating the enemy. Next day, a drunken Russian ordered Sister E., who so far had managed to hide, to go along with him. When she refused, he became so infuriated that he started shooting at us at random. He failed to hit Sister E., but wounded Mrs. L., the daughter of the baker at the upper end of the village, her two children, Reinhard and Lieschen, Mrs. R., and Mr. S., of Liegnitz. Then he fled. Sister E. and Mrs. R. ran out of the house, but when they reached the woods they were caught by Russians and taken to Bunzlau. There was no light in the cellar and everyone was in a panic, screaming and shouting. Mrs. L.'s little boy, Reinhard, who was five years old, was fatally injured and died almost immediately. We carried his body and the injured upstairs into the dining-room, and bandaged their wounds as best as we could. No more Russians molested us that day, but two soldiers came to offer the priest their official condolence, as they assumed that it was his child that had been killed...

In the meantime, the Russians had searched the vicarage from top to bottom. They had sampled all the food in the pantry, had smashed the safe with a pickaxe, and stolen all the bicycles, clothes, linen, candles, and toilet accessories. They had also smashed the wireless set and had left it lying in the garden. Three violins and about 120 valuable gramophone records had likewise been smashed and were lying scattered about all over the floor. They had not, however, smashed any of the mirrors, crucifixes, or pictures, nor had they damaged the chalices, the monstrance, or the candelabra.

It was the third Sunday in Lent, and after we had all celebrated mass together in the cellar and had taken Holy Communion, I went to the churchyard to dig a grave for poor little Reinhard. His death had protected us from being molested by the Russians for a couple of days. — A few hours later, whilst a fierce snow-storm was raging, the Russians fled from the village, and, at about five o'clock in the afternoon, the regiment "Grossdeutschland" launched a fierce attack from the upper end of the village which put the last remnants of the enemy's forces to rout and liberated us. Our joy and gratitude knew no bounds when, after fierce fighting, the first lot of German soldiers entered the vicarage. They were greatly surprised to find us all alive... Our joy turned to sorrow, however, when we heard of the dreadful sufferings which the other parishioners had been forced to endure. About sixty parishioners had been killed during the time that the Russians had

occupied the village. Our common sufferings and distress seemed to make us one big family...

The front remained rigid and there was no activity either on the German or on the Russian side until the capitulation...

From June 1st, 1945, onwards the Poles closed the Neisse frontier and refused to allow the Silesians who had fled westwards to return to their native towns and villages. When I reached the village I found a Polish artillery regiment (1,500 men) stationed there. The vicarage was untenanted and most of the furniture had been removed. The village itself was sadly changed. Horses grazed in the fields that had been tilled, the land was overgrown with weeds, the farms had all been looted, household utensils and furniture had been piled up in heaps at the back of most of the houses, and all the agricultural machines and tools had been left standing out in the open and had suffered considerable damage. The Germans had been turned out of their homes in a most ruthless way by the Poles on June 20th, and had been sent to Goerlitz. Some of them now returned to Hennersdorf by roundabout routes, but they were only tolerated as labourers on the farms. They were forced to work for the Poles for nothing, and were not even given food or accommodation. In fact, they were not treated like human beings at all. The Germans, and in particular the women and girls, were completely at the mercy of the soldiers and officers. At night, they were constantly obliged to change their quarters so as to be safe...

When we reached the vicarage we found Family E. living there. The only room that was habitable was the kitchen. All the furniture in the rest of the rooms, the grand piano, the pictures, clocks, curtains, carpets, and chandeliers had been removed by soldiers. Most of the roof was missing. The walls had been badly damaged in the course of the fighting and some of them were riddled with holes made by shell splinters. There were no panes left in the windows, and all the locks on the doors had either been removed or else damaged intentionally to such an extent that they could no longer be used. All the keys were missing. The barn and the stables were in a dreadful condition. The yard and the garden resembled a rubbish-tip. The whole place was overgrown with thistles and weeds. The garden-fence had been smashed, there were several bomb craters in the garden and the adjoining field, and the fruit-trees had been badly damaged. All the rooms in the house, from the attic down to the cellar, were a picture of destruction and chaos. Owing to the fact that most of the roof was missing, the ceilings had been badly damaged by rain and looked as though they might collapse at any moment. We were nearly moved to tears when we saw the havoc that had been wrought, but the joy of the parishioners at our return helped us to overcome our sorrow. The sacred precincts of the church and the churchyard had also been desecrated. It was enough to drive one to despair. — Conditions were now so terrible that we constantly lived in fear and trembling of what might happen to us and never felt safe. It is impossible to describe our sufferings. Only those who have themselves experienced such sufferings can know what we must have endured...

... In February, 1946, the Poles resorted to further terrorist measures in order to force the Germans to flee "of their own free will". The Polish mayor dismissed the German mayor from office and made him work for him as a secretary. The Polish mayor was an out-and-out Communist; he robbed and stole, he raped women, and was constantly drunk. In addition, he was crafty and sly, and persecuted all those who were not Communists like himself. The inhabitants of Hennersdorf were completely at his mercy. It was therefore not surprising that conditions went from bad to worse. Polish civilians and sentries got together at night and carried out raids on the houses in the village. The Germans lodged various complaints with the mayor and the militia in Lauban, but nothing was done to remedy matters. Before long every single house in the village had been raided and looted. On two occasions, during the night from April 3rd to April 4th, and during the night from May 5th to May 6th, the vicarage was raided. The marauders smashed the windows and blinds with the butt-ends of their rifles, entered the house, and drove all the occupants into one of the rooms. Some of them then kept guard over us, threatening us with their rifles and jeering at us, whilst the rest ransacked the house and stole whatever they could find. There were some guests staying the night at the house, who were on their way to Kohlfurt, and they were robbed of all their belongings. The marauders actually stole the sheets off my bed, as well as all my clothes, with the exception of those that I happened to be wearing, all my money, shoes, linen, and even a comb, a razor, and a pencil. These dreadful acts of terrorism resulted in many of the Germans fleeing from the village, and orders were suddenly issued that no one must leave Hennersdorf. Anyone who went out of the house at night ran the risk of being robbed and shot. That was what happened to Mr. Hoffmann, the former German mayor, who, on May 27th, 1946, tried to flee from Hennersdorf with his family. Shortly after leaving the village they were caught by Polish sentries. Mr. Hoffmann was stabbed to death, and his family were robbed of all their belongings and sent to Kohlfurt. I buried him in the Catholic cemetery and most of the villagers attended his funeral. His assassins were given three weeks' leave for their "heroic deed". God will judge them.

Report No. 157

Ober-Steinkirch, near Lauban ²²³

Ober-Steinkirch belongs to Mittel-Steinkirch, which is part of the parish of Marklissa.

Polish and Russian Terrorism

When the Russians occupied Silesia on May 8th, 1945, we all of us ventured to hope that the worst was over and that conditions would now improve. But our hopes were deceived, and life became more unbearable

²²³ s *Beitraege*, Vol II, p 435 ff

than ever, for we were now tormented, robbed, raped, and deprived of our rights.

When we returned to the village on May 10th, 1945, from the Sudentenland, whither we had fled, we found the house in an indescribable condition. Most of the furniture and household utensils lay scattered about all over the house and in the garden. There were about thirty snipe holes on the land belonging to the farm and most of them contained straw, mattresses, household utensils, as well as the heads and carcasses of cows, pigs, and poultry, and also the body of a Russian soldier. It took the six of us ten days to tidy up the place.

During the first few weeks of the Russian Occupation huge herds of cattle were driven through the village practically every day. Many of the villages in the district were deprived of all their cattle. Orders were also issued that all motor cycles, bicycles, and wireless sets must be handed over to the Russians. The village was in a constant state of commotion and turmoil. Every day brought some alarming news or other, and matters finally came to a head when the Poles arrived in the village on June 24th, 1945. They promptly expelled all the Germans in the neighbouring districts and turned them out of the country. The inhabitants of Ober-Steinkirch, however, were spared. In fact, the village resembled a lonely island in the middle of the ocean. That same evening all the inhabitants of the village had to report at the estate in Oertsmannsdorf, where they were then assigned to various types of work. During the harvest season, Polish militiamen, armed with whips and rifles, went from house to house every morning and rounded up the villagers and took them along to the estate, where they had to help gather in the crops. They made us work all day long, until eight o'clock and sometimes half-past in the evening, and stood on guard the whole of the time. On one occasion, when we wanted to go home at half-past seven in the evening they fired shots at us and made us go back to work again. Incidentally, we received no food and no pay for the work we did.

To our horror, two Russian penal companies arrived in the neighbouring village of Beerberg at the end of August, 1945, for the purpose of dismantling the munition-factories there. Every night the men of these companies used to raid the village and loot the houses.

At the beginning of September, 1945, the Poles began to seize the property belonging to Germans. They used to come and inspect the houses and farms, and if they took a fancy to the property in question, they would then come back in about two or three days' time with an official certificate of seizure and inform the German owners, "All this mine and you work for me as servant!"

More and more Poles arrived every week, and by the end of November, 1945, the village was completely occupied by them. In October, the number of thefts of cattle committed by the Poles began to increase at an alarming rate, and finally, in November, the Polish mayor issued an order that two Poles, who were armed, and two Germans, who were not

armed, were to stand on sentry duty in the village every night. The number of cases of looting, assault, and shooting also began to increase. Every week three or four German families were robbed of all their belongings, their underwear and their clothes, by Poles. The latter would raid and search the house on the pretext of looking for wireless sets, motor cycles, and similar objects, which had long since been handed over to the Russians. Once these so-called policemen were in the house they no longer bothered to search for wireless sets or typewriters, but simply stole whatever they set eyes on and whatever took their fancy. As a rule they only allowed the Germans to keep their oldest and shabbiest clothes. In the course of these raids the Poles usually beat and maltreated the Germans. In fact, some of them were mishandled to such an extent that they were in bed for days afterwards, and a number of persons in the village died as a result of the ill-treatment they were subjected to.

... At the end of November, 1945, the first case of murder occurred in the village. The murderer was a young Pole of about twenty, who was drunk when he committed the crime. It happened on a Sunday, November 25th, 1945, at about eight-thirty in the morning. The man who was murdered was one of the most highly esteemed men of the village and had held the office of mayor from 1915 to 1934. He was eighty-seven years old. The Pole in question murdered him in his bed by hitting him with the butt-end of a rifle so hard that splinters of bone were later found on the window-sill, about three yards away from the bed, and then finally shot him. The murdered man's wife, who was paralysed, was lying in bed in the same room and witnessed this dreadful crime. The second murder in the village occurred on December 21st, 1945. The third house on the main street of the village was occupied by a Pole, who, on December 19th, left on a journey to central Poland, to visit his relatives there, taking with him a number of suitcases and packing-cases which contained goods that he had stolen. When he departed he instructed the former German owner of the house not to let any Poles enter the premises during his absence. Next night some Polish marauders appeared at the house and tried to enter, but the German informed them that his Polish master had forbidden him to let anyone into the house. After a long argument they finally departed. Next evening, however, they returned, and, upon the German refusing to let them enter, they shot him through one of the windows and then forced their way into the house. On December 22nd, 1945, at ten o'clock in the evening, a German from Mittel-Steinkirch was shot in front of a house in Ober-Steinkirch. The reason for this murder was never ascertained. It was not until ten days later that the Polish Criminal Investigation Department gave permission for the bodies of the two men to be removed from the scene of the crime.

On January 30th, 1946, a German, K. K., was shot whilst on night-duty in the oxen stables on the estate in Ober-Steinkirch. That same night an ox was stolen from the stables. It was found dead about half a mile away, on the road to Marklissa, next morning. The German watch-

man probably came upon the marauders just as they were in the act of stealing the ox, for the latter had also been hit by bullets, no doubt at the same time as the marauders fired at the German. The body of the murdered man lay on a dung-heap for ten days before the Polish Criminal Investigation Department finally gave permission for it to be buried.

On February 5th, 1946, R. K., a German living in Ober-Steinkirch, was murdered by the Pole who had seized his house. This Pole had been appointed mayor of Ober-Steinkirch at noon on the day in question. At about eight o'clock in the evening, he and the former mayor, both of them drunk, returned to the house. The old man was sitting at the table, working. The Pole who lived in the house promptly started beating him with the butt-end of a rifle and then shot him. The murderer disappeared from the village that same night, and, after that, things quietened down a little in Ober-Steinkirch.

Three persons were killed in the hamlet of Hain, which belongs to the parish of Ober-Steinkirch and consists of twelve small farms.

In the spring of 1946 conditions were somewhat quieter, or perhaps it only seemed so to us because we had gradually become accustomed to Polish methods and were always expecting the worst to happen, and thus did not allow ourselves to be disconcerted as easily as in former days. At the end of June, 1946, that is to say on June 29th, we were expelled from Ober-Steinkirch. Many of the expellees, who had once owned a farm, now left the village like the poorest of the poor, — attired in rags, without even a change of clothes or shoes, and, in many cases, with no money at all. They had been reduced to beggary by the Poles. In conclusion, I should like to mention the fact that two of the worst bandits we had in the village (the word "bandit", incidentally, was often used by the Poles themselves, and many of them actually said of themselves, "I'm a bandit"), on the evening prior to our expulsion, raided all the houses still occupied by those who were to be expelled next day; armed with rifles and whips, these two bandits, who professed to be village policemen, threatened the inhabitants and searched the sacks or rucksacks which the latter had packed with the last of their belongings, in readiness for their departure next day, and stole whatever took their fancy. It goes without saying that those of the Germans who were expelled left their native village without even shedding a tear. Most of them, though reduced to poverty, were glad to get out of the country alive. Those Germans who were forced to remain behind, however, wept to think that for them Polish tyranny had not yet ended.

*Report No. 158***The Parish of Goerlitz** ²²⁴

The parish of Goerlitz included 11,200 Catholics (1942) and 123,150 persons of other denominations (1929). The oldest parish-churches in Goerlitz, which date from the Middle Ages, have been Protestant since the Reformation. At the beginning of the nineteenth century the Catholics in Goerlitz were in the pastoral charge of the church at Jauernik. The first Catholic service in Goerlitz after the Reformation was held in 1829. Holy Cross parish was founded on April 2, 1835. Holy Cross Church was built during the years 1850 to 1853. St Jacob's Church was built in 1900, and the parish was founded on December 20, 1918.

Up to 1945 Goerlitz did not have many air-raids, although latterly the alert was sounded practically every day. In January, however, the situation became more serious. Refugees from Breslau brought the alarming news that the Russians were approaching. On February 18th, orders were issued that Goerlitz was to be evacuated within a few hours' time. We were obliged to leave our house as it was situated near to a bridge. My aged mother and I took up our quarters at the convent of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Charles Borromeo, and, like the rest of the nuns, I volunteered as a nurse. I thereupon received permission to remain in the town. The enemy was advancing towards Goerlitz from the direction of Kohlfurt and Lauban. The number of air-raids increased, but the damage done was relatively slight. The station and the district near to the townhall and the southern part of the town were hit by bombs. On April 16th, two bombs fell on the vicarage garden, but the church, as if by a miracle, was spared.

On May 8th, 1945, the enemy reached the outskirts of the town. Shrapnel whizzed over the house and we feared the worst. We all assembled in the cellar and waited for the Russians to seize the town. We knelt in prayer before the Consecrated Host, which had been placed in a small room adjoining the cellar. At about two o'clock the first lot of Russian soldiers came to the convent, but they behaved in a very orderly manner. On the morning of May 9th, Russian troops swarmed into the town. The streets were deserted. By noon, the Russians, flushed with victory, were looting all the houses and raping the womenfolk. Most of the soldiers were under the influence of drink, and as a result the number of atrocities began to increase at an alarming rate. Unfortunately, my mother and I went back to our own house again, as a number of rather uncouth-looking Russians took up their quarters at the convent. We spent a terrible night. As soon as it grew dark the streets re-echoed with the screams of women and girls who had fallen into the hands of the Russians. Every ten minutes or so, parties of soldiers raided the house. As I was attired in the dress of my order, I tried to protect the occupants of the house by pointing to the cross I was wearing, every time a party of Russians entered the house. All went well until about

²²⁴ s. *Beitraege*, Vol IV, p 512 ff

three o'clock in the morning. Just as we were beginning to hope that the dreadful night was over, four drunken Russians appeared and started searching the house for two girls who had hidden in a room on the fourth floor. After ransacking our apartment, they went upstairs and I followed them in order to protect the others. They found the two girls and locked the three of us in the room. I went down on my knees and begged them not to molest us. Thereupon they forced me onto a chair; one of them stood in front of me, pointing his loaded revolver at me, and made me look on whilst the others raped the poor girls. It was dreadful. Eventually, they let me out of the room as my mother came to look for me.

Next day we were turned out of the house once more, allegedly because two captains were going to take up their quarters there, but the real reason was that the Russians wanted to ransack and loot the house undisturbed. We found some private quarters and stayed there until the beginning of June. My mother kept going back to our old apartment, and, on one occasion, when I went to fetch her, two Russians followed me, without my knowing, and suddenly seized hold of me as I entered the house. Somehow or other, thanks to a divine Providence, I managed to free myself from their clutches and escaped into the open. An hour later, I returned to the house with a male escort to fetch my mother away. Just as the three of us were about to leave the house, ten female partisans suddenly appeared in the hall and, to my horror, tried to prevent us from leaving. But the Lord protected us once more. I grabbed hold of my mother's hand, dragged her out of the house, and rushed down the street with her as fast as I could. At the beginning of June, 1945, many of the inhabitants who had fled from the town prior to the arrival of the Russians returned, and we went back to our own apartment again. All the doors and windows, incidentally, had been smashed. On June 21st, we were considerably alarmed at the news that all the bridges across the Neisse had been closed and that the Poles occupying the territory on the opposite bank of the river were expelling all the Germans. As we lived right by the Neisse, on the Russian side, all the poor refugees came past the house. For weeks on end we were terrified lest all Goerlitz might become Polish territory. Treks of refugees arrived in the town in the hopes of being able to return home in a short time, as it was rumoured that the frontier was to be opened again in a few weeks' time. Every night, Russian patrols fired at the refugees who were either trying to get across the Neisse into the Russian zone by climbing along the girders of the bridges or else were attempting to rescue their belongings from the Polish zone. We lived in constant fear and trembling of what would happen next. At six o'clock in the morning, on July 6th, Russian lorries drove through our street and suddenly stopped in front of our house. We were obliged to open the door, and the Russians tried to get hold of me. They searched the apartment and wanted accommodation for the night. In the twinkling of an eye one of the Russians locked the door and tried to seize hold of me. Fortunately, however, I managed to escape by the other door in the room, and ran into one of the other

apartments and crawled under one of the beds there. I had a similar experience on another occasion, when, desperate with hunger, I begged a Russian to give me a little meat as they had been slaughtering cattle wholesale in the garden next-door.

Owing to the large number of refugees, the population of the town had increased to a very considerable extent, and the situation as regards food supplies was now extremely serious. Hunger-typhus broke out and hundreds of persons died. Together with the parish-priest, I visited the refugee camps and the hospitals, where conditions were indescribable. The inmates were covered with lice and vermin, which, of course, also spread typhus. One man I saw was literally eaten up by vermin. People were too weak and exhausted — all they received in the way of food was a plate of watery soup once a day — to keep themselves clean. The air in the rooms was stifling. The inmates of the camps and the hospitals begged us to help them, but we were powerless to save them from starvation, for we ourselves were starving. The only solace we could give them was the Consecrated Host. The faces of the Catholics and of many others, too, lit up when they saw it. In the humblest surroundings the Spirit of Christ moved among the people. A white cloth was spread out amidst the dirty cups and potato peelings and the Reverend Father placed the Consecrated Host on it. And the way to Heaven was smoothed for many of these poor creatures. — Mass burials were held almost every day. In the middle of November, my dear mother died of starvation. There were no coffins to be had, and the dead were simply placed on a board and wrapped in sheets of paper. The church in the Protestant cemetery was full of corpses, and the stench was dreadful. I went to all the joiners in the vicinity and managed to collect enough boards to make a coffin for my mother. I then took them along to an undertaker and he supplied me with a plain, wooden coffin. The priests of the two Catholic parishes took it in turns to bless the dead. When my mother was buried the Reverend Father delivered a moving address and said that it was the Lord's Will that I was with my mother when she died, for if I had not been a member of a religious order, I should not have been in the town. Next morning, the Feast of Mary's Sacrifice, I, too, made my offering and walked behind the hearse, on which there were four coffins, as the only mourner, and parted from my dear one.

In the course of time things quietened down somewhat in the town, for the poor refugees were forced to leave and go westwards, to Germany. Food was extremely scarce. The bread ration consisted of half a loaf of bread for ten days, for two persons. We used to make potato-cakes out of potato peelings. There was no milk to be had and hardly any fats. Hundreds of persons died, but the victims in this case were inhabitants of the town and not refugees. Conditions were as bad as ever and there was by no means a feeling of security.

*Report No. 159***Kohlfurt, near Goerlitz** ²²⁵

The curacy of Kohlfurt included 420 Catholics (1942) and 6,538 persons of other denominations (1929) Kohlfurt is part of the parish of Penzig

... By the middle of January, 1945, countless refugees, in particular priests and members of religious orders, had sought shelter at the Catholic vicarage. At that time we little foresaw the part the vicarage would play in the weeks and months of dreadful suffering which were to follow. As the enemy forces continued to advance without meeting with any resistance whatsoever, Father Fruntke ²²⁶ decided to remain in Kohlfurt... At about five o'clock one Friday afternoon, February 16th, 1945, to be precise, twenty-seven Poles (men, women, and children) came to the vicarage and asked if they might seek shelter in the church. We took them in and gave them a warm room at the vicarage. Next morning, enemy planes attacked Kohlfurt and dropped bombs on the station, in particular. The last lot of officials employed in Kohlfurt now left by train. It was the last train to depart from the station. The village seemed completely deserted... Whilst we were having our breakfast on the Monday morning, February 19th, after having previously celebrated early mass, we were suddenly alarmed to hear the sound of breaking glass and men talking in a foreign language. Before we had time to open the front door, the Russians wrenched off the latch. They were just about to smash the door with their heavy boots when we opened it and fortunately prevented them from carrying out their intention. Three heavily armed soldiers (a sergeant and two other men) stepped inside the house and, in an agitated voice, asked us if there were any German soldiers about. The priest tried to calm them and asked them to be seated and offered them a glass of wine. They made the priest drink first, however, before they sampled the wine. The sergeant could speak a little German and, pointing to a map he had, asked us how far it was from Kohlfurt to Munich, as they wanted to go to Munich... In the course of the afternoon, on the second day, we were molested by a Russian officer, who gave us a nasty scare. He tried to force a young woman who had taken refuge with us to go along to his quarters with him. She refused to do so, however, and he eventually went away again. But that same evening he returned, accompanied by seven men, one of whom was a Mongolian, and wanted two women to go along with him and the men to their quarters, allegedly in order to peel potatoes. The priest, who suspected that this was merely a trick, tried to persuade them to leave, but they started threatening the young woman who had been molested by the officer that

²²⁵ s *Beitraege*, Vol III, p 337 ff

²²⁶ Father Willibald Fruntke, the priest of Kohlfurt (born on February 6, 1885, ordained on July 31, 1913), was later appointed priest of Ralshoven, near Juelich/Rhineland, and died there on October 11, 1948

afternoon and also a Polish woman and shouted at them to come along with them. The young woman managed to escape being raped by jumping out of one of the windows on the first floor, but the Polish woman was less fortunate. Next morning the Poles left Kohlfurt in order to return to their native country... That afternoon the big villa belonging to the owner of the sawmill burnt down. It was most uncanny at night. Several fires broke out. During the day and at night Russian soldiers constantly raided the houses, robbing and stealing, smashing crockery and furniture, and threatening to shoot the occupants. Of the five thousand inhabitants of Kohlfurt, only about thirty persons, most of them old, had remained in the village. One of them, the father of the young woman who had sought shelter at the vicarage, was shot two days after the Russians seized the village, allegedly because he had taken no notice when they called to him to stop... Russian soldiers continued to harass and molest the inhabitants to an ever-increasing degree... It was with some relief that we learnt that all civilians were to leave the village. We were told that we were to help clear away debris, and that we must report at the headquarters of the Russian commanding officer in an hour's time. Word was then, however, passed round that we had a few hours longer before we need report. Russian soldiers molested us whilst we packed up our belongings, and stole whatever took their fancy. By the time we reached the headquarters of the commanding officer we had been robbed of all we possessed. We were kept there for three days in confinement and guarded by Russian soldiers, until we finally received orders to leave. At the beginning of March we set out on foot for Alt-Kohlfurt-Rauscha, escorted by two Russian soldiers. Orders had been issued that all German civilians were to retreat to the right bank of the Bober. It was with heavy hearts and consumed with anxiety as to what our fate would be in the coming weeks, that we left our village. Sadly, we gazed back at the village for the last time before our beloved church passed from our view... In the evening we reached the small market-town of Rauscha... Two days later we continued our journey and arrived in Halbau early in the afternoon... The people there told us that the Russians had abducted all the men who had been employed at the colliery. We later learnt that they had been taken to Caucasia... We had been in Halbau three days when orders were issued that all civilians must leave... We now made for Sagan. The nuns there very kindly placed three rooms at our disposal. The main building of the hospital had been badly damaged and the nuns were obliged to live in the annex. Two days after arriving in Sagan, we were informed by the Russian commandant that we must leave the town. On the morning of March 19th, after celebrating holy mass in honour of St. Joseph, we set out for Eckersdorf, near Sagan. The Russian commandant of Eckersdorf was very amiable and kindly allowed us to take up our quarters at the vicarage. We were also allowed to use the church for our services... We were greatly alarmed when we heard a lot of shooting going on outside, during the night of May 7th to May 8th, but after a while we saw a lot of coloured lights in the sky and guessed that some glad tidings or

other must be the reason for the shooting. Early next morning we learnt that the war had come to an end... After lengthy negotiations with the Russian authorities we received permission to return to Kohlfurt at the end of May. On Sunday, May 20th, we set out for home. It was Whit Sunday and a glorious, sunny day. When we reached Nieder-Hermsdorf, near Sagan, we stopped for a little rest. All of a sudden, a Red Cross van drove up and some men jumped out of it, assaulted us and robbed us. We reached Halbau that day and spent the night there. We set off again on the Tuesday and got to Rauscha late that evening. The town was swarming with Polish militia... We were gradually approaching home and in the distance we could already see the spire of the Protestant church in Alt-Kohlfurt. All of a sudden, we noticed three marauders following us on bicycles. They caught up with us and stopped us. In a twinkling they seized hold of our handcarts, cut all the ropes securing our luggage, threw all our belongings onto the road, and stole all the things that took their fancy...

It was with some misgivings that we entered the village of Kohlfurt, but we were extremely relieved when we saw that the church and the vicarage were still standing. When we got up to the vicarage we discovered that the front door was wide open. The door of the church had been nailed up. On entering the vicarage we noticed an unpleasant smell. All the rooms were in a state of chaos. The largest pieces of furniture were still in the house, but all the tables, chairs, beds, and household utensils were missing. The Russians had, however, left a lot of old mattresses behind, which, during the months that followed, often served as beds for the many expellees and homeless persons who passed through Kohlfurt. The interior of the church was also a picture of chaos and destruction. Both the side-altars and the communicants' bench had been removed and the organ had been smashed. There were several red flags, with white inscriptions on them, hanging on the walls. It was obvious that the church had been used as a cinema. We were very pleased, however, to discover that the wooden statues of the saints on the high altar had not been damaged. Greatly relieved that not more danger had been done, we went back to Alt-Kohlfurt and spent the night there, finally returning home next day. Several other villagers had also returned in the meantime...

When we gradually settled down again, we began tidying up the church and the adjoining premises. The men and women of the parish helped us in this task. We found the wooden slabs off the side-altars and the communicants' bench in the shrubbery in the church-garden. After a lengthy search we also succeeded in finding the statues which had stood on the side-altars. The statue of St. Joseph had not been damaged, but the heads of the statues of the Blessed Virgin and the Holy Child had been hewn off. Much to the sorrow of the priest, all the sacred vessels, the sacramental wine, the hosts, and the vestments were missing. We found the empty winebottles in a garden nearby. The altar-cloths, albs, and valuable pieces of lace were strewn about the church-garden. They

were torn and dirty, and, to judge by the large, black oil-stains on them, had been used as cleaning-rags. It was quite impossible to get them clean again. Despite the fact that the priest had been seriously ill a few weeks before the Russian invasion, he had taken all the necessary steps to ensure that all the valuables belonging to the church were removed to safety. Unfortunately, however, the Russian forces had been in the village so long that they had eventually discovered the secret hiding-place. All that was left of the beautiful vestments, which the church had acquired during the latter part of the war, was the braiding. The beautiful Gothic alb, which had been presented to the priest by the parishioners on the occasion of his silver jubilee, was missing... It took weeks to tidy up the church, and as holy mass could not be celebrated since we had no sacramental wine, the priest started holding prayer meetings, which Protestants also attended. After Germany's collapse and the sad fate which had befallen the population, there was a most noticeable change in the attitude of the Protestants towards the Catholic priests. They put their trust in them, as they had never done before, and in cases of sickness and death went to the Catholic priest for advice and help.

Report No. 160

The Parish of Liegnitz ²²⁷

The parish of Liegnitz included 14,950 Catholics (1942) and 72,272 persons of other denominations (1929). The parish-church of St John the Baptist's originally belonged to the Minorites. In 1529 it was incorporated with the collegiate monastery, and in 1698 was transferred to the Jesuit Monastery which had been founded in 1689. The church and the monastery were then rebuilt during the years 1706 to 1727. In 1801, after the Jesuit monastery ceased to exist, St John's Church became the Catholic parish-church. — The parish-church of Holy Trinity was built in the Gothic style during the years 1902 to 1904.

... When we stepped out into the street at about eleven o'clock in the morning, on February 10th, 1945, the fighting was practically over and there was only a bit of a skirmish still going on between a German police unit, which had fled to the Piasts' Castle, and the Russians. The latter then set fire to the castle, which was completely destroyed, with the exception of one of the towers, which was wilfully set on fire later on.

On Sunday, February 11th, a series of fires broke out in the town, and from then onwards until the day of the capitulation buildings were constantly burning down. According to statistics collected by Germans employed at the waterworks, the Russians set fire to about four hundred houses in Liegnitz in three months. Many of these fires no doubt occurred as a result of negligence... The fire which destroyed the houses adjoining the market square, in our parish spread to the house next to the

²²⁷ s. *Beitraege*, Vol II, p. 500 ff

church, and the vicarage and the church were greatly endangered. Russians tried to prevent us from extinguishing the fires by damaging the hose-pipes, and they stole the things we managed to salvage from the houses that were on fire. A voluntary fire-brigade, which consisted of French internees, assisted us most courageously in our attempts to extinguish the fires at the houses, No. 1 and No. 3. And we managed to prevent the fires from spreading beyond the top floor. The situation became extremely dangerous when the fire veered and spread to the old people's home run by the Poor Clares, where a large number of persons had sought shelter. We only managed to rescue the bed-ridden patients on the top floor in the nick of time. The Russians then seized all the things that had been salvaged, and stopped the sick and those who had rescued them, in an adjoining street, and checked their papers. Only the top floor of the house was destroyed by fire, but the Russians later set fire to the house again on two other occasions. The sick were given accommodation at St. Martha's Home... Meanwhile, the vast migration of people moved on, — to other towns, countries, and to eternity, for the Russian invasion claimed many victims. Authentic reports revealed that the Russians, on entering the town, shot scores of people who had sought shelter in cellars, either because they thought the Germans were partisans, or because they were out to kill all the Germans they could, or else because they were drunk. About a fortnight after the town had been seized by the Russians the three of us ventured to undertake the long walk through the town out to the cemetery, as we had to make arrangements for the burial of three German soldiers and two nuns, who had recently died. The makeshift hearse, a handcart, on which we conveyed the bodies to the cemetery, afforded us a certain amount of protection as we passed through the town. There were literally piles of dead heaped up in the cemetery — policemen, civilians, persons who had been shot or beaten to death, hanged, poisoned, victims of the Russians, and those who had committed suicide. These were not all the dead of the past two weeks, however, for many of those who had died had been buried by their relatives or neighbours in gardens. Whilst we were standing there in the cemetery, two Russians came up to us and indicated to us by gestures that we were to remove the boots and the rings from the bodies of the dead. They were apparently fairly harmless Russians, for when I told them that we could not do so because the corpses were already stiff, they let us alone.

Registration of the population: All members of the National Socialist Party, irrespective of whether they had been active members, of whom, in any case, there were only a few left, or merely paying members, were promptly arrested. Some of them were shot on the spot, whilst the rest were interned and then taken eastwards. Many of them died of starvation on the way, whilst the majority lost their lives either in Upper Silesia, where they were forced to dismantle industrial plant, or else in Russia. Only one former member of the Party returned to Liegnitz alive. A similar fate befell the rest of the men in Liegnitz, who, like us, had

never had anything at all to do with the Party. All the men who were fit to work were registered by the Russians for work in the rear fighting zone. Those who hoped to get exempted because they were suffering from some complaint or other were superficially examined by persons who most probably had no medical knowledge at all. Even those who were suffering from serious heart-trouble were registered for work. When they reported for work, the men had to bring enough food with them to last ten days and sufficient underwear to last four weeks. Some of the men were actually sent off to work when they registered, whilst others were rounded up in the street and were not even allowed to go home and collect their belongings. They had no food rations, either, and were thus a burden to those who had managed to take some food along with them. As the food rations issued to the population were very meagre, the supplies which the men took with them were by no means adequate. For a whole week the Russians never bothered to give us anything to eat. After spending three days in custody in Liegnitz we had to walk to Trachenberg, a distance of about 47 miles. The journey took us two and a half days. Our group consisted of about 250 men, including two young boys of fifteen. We all managed to survive the journey on foot, but in some of the other groups a number of men were shot by the Russians, solely because they were too exhausted to walk.

The Germans who had been turned out of the town and had only been able to take a few of their belongings with them, either on small hand-carts or in suitcases, endured terrible hardships for weeks on end. Most of them found temporary accommodation in Langenwaldau, about six miles from Liegnitz, whilst the rest of them were given makeshift quarters in Ruestern, Pfaffendorf, and Kuchelberg. The houses in these villages were by no means large enough to accommodate the huge crowds of refugees, and many of them were therefore forced to live in lofts, barns, and stables. A man I was acquainted with, a teacher, actually slept in a pigsty, despite the fact that he was seriously ill. It is still a mystery to me how most of the people managed to exist for two whole months, for they had practically nothing to eat. All the cattle had been driven away and the grain supplies seized by the Russians. People used to sneak along hidden paths — there were pickets on all the main roads — to the neighbouring villages and collect what the Russians had left behind. It was hardly surprising that epidemics broke out, — typhus and dysentery, which claimed hundreds of victims. One of the houses at the upper end of the village was used as a hospital and people were taken there to die. Needless to say, conditions there were anything but hygienic, and no medical help was available. After a time the Russians began recruiting Germans and forced all those who were fit to work, irrespective of their age or sex, to build entrenchments in the Liegnitz district. They even recruited persons who were seventy and over for this kind of work. One of the persons who was shot by the Russians in the course of this recruiting was Mr. Seemann, the promising young cathedral organist. On being evacuated from Breslau, he and his wife

had gone to live with her parents in Liegnitz. His wife was pregnant and, owing to her condition, rather nervy and excitable. How Mr. S. managed to avoid being forced to work by the Russians when they rounded up all the men in Liegnitz, I do not know, but, at any rate, when they eventually got hold of him in Langenwaldau, his wife went for one of the Russians and wounded him with a pocket-knife. The Russians thereupon fired at her, her husband, and her parents. Mr. S. was killed instantaneously, his mother-in-law died on the way to the hospital in Liegnitz, and his wife died a few weeks later from the injuries she had sustained. As Mr. S. was said to be suffering from an internal complaint, he was thus spared being slowly tortured to death, which was the fate that befell many of those who were forced to work for the Russians. Some of the overseers, former concentration camp internees, made the most inhuman and exorbitant demands as regards work, despite the fact that the men often had a long way to walk to the place where they worked and were exhausted owing to lack of food. The men were obliged to remain at their work until they had performed the amount expected of them. I heard of cases where they were actually forced to work two days at a stretch or else were marched back to the camp, allowed only half an hour's break, and then marched back to work again. These, of course, were the worst cases. The girls of the village no doubt suffered most, for they were constantly being molested and raped by the Russians. To quote but one typical case: four girls who found the situation unbearable tried to flee. Unfortunately, they fell into the hands of marauding Russians. When they tried to defend themselves one of them, the sister of our parish-clerk, whose other sister had been murdered by Russians, was stabbed to death. The other girls managed to escape and eventually succeeded in getting jobs as nurses at St. Martha's Home.

Early in the morning, on May 13th, 1945, the Sunday after the capitulation, the inhabitants of Liegnitz began to swarm back into the town again, and eventually I found myself practically alone in the village with those who were sick and helpless and a few cautious persons who had not ventured to return to Liegnitz. Several persons had died and I took their bodies to the cemetery myself, and also promised those who were seriously ill that I would find some means of conveying them back to the town. With the help of the German authorities I succeeded in getting those who were sick back to Liegnitz and finding accommodation for them at St. Martha's Home.

Practically at the same time as the Germans returned to Liegnitz the Poles also began to swarm into the town. A period of great suffering and hardship now began. Hardly had the inhabitants of the town made their dwellings, which were in a state of chaos after having been raided by the Russians, habitable once more, when they were turned out by the Poles, who in many cases were aided by the Polish militia in this respect. Many of the Germans were forced to move their quarters twelve times or even more, and had to make a fresh start each time. It was not safe

for Germans to be out on the streets, for they ran the risk of being seized by the Poles and forced to do some kind of heavy work or other, for which they usually received no pay whatsoever. A very sad incident occurred in July, 1946. Despite repeated protests on our part, Polish pickets used to stand guard outside the church and seize persons who had attended early morning service and take them off to work. On the occasion in question, a young mother, who had accompanied her child to the children's mass, tried to escape from these brutes and was shot, not far from the church, by a cadet from the officers' training school...

Immediately after the capitulation the inhabitants of the town set about the task of restoring St. John's Church. Beams were obtained from deserted sites for scaffolding, an electric hoist and the necessary bricks were procured, and the cornice, which had been smashed, was soon repaired. The beams and rafters of the roof were then repaired and the roof re-slatted. About 18,000 slates were used for this purpose, but they were only placed on the roof loosely and without mortar for the time being, as those who were engaged in the task of repairing the church were constantly obliged to interrupt their work owing to Polish and Russian interference. A joinery was set up at the vicarage and some new pews were made to replace those that had been smashed. We were able to hold our first service in the church on the Feast of Corpus Christi, 1945.

Report No. 161

The Parish of Goldberg²²⁸

The parish of Goldberg included 1,295 Catholics (1942) and 10,787 persons of other denominations (1929). Until 1810 the Church of St Hedwig's belonged to the monastery of the Minorites, an order which is said to have been founded in Gruenberg in 1212 by St Hedwig. The present church was built in the baroque style in 1708.

... The beautiful mountain-resort of Goldberg was very badly damaged by shells and fire. When the Russians seized the town on February 13th, 1945, they shot a large number of men, including several who had not taken part in the fighting. One of the victims was Mr. Reimann, the tradesman, who was a trustee of the church. Thanks to a divine Providence, the church and the convent were only slightly damaged. There was a fairly large hole, caused by a bomb, in the roof of the church, but this was later repaired.

Soon after capturing the town, the enemy turned out all the inhabitants. The healthy were sent to the villages in the Liegnitz district, where some of them had to help build entrenchments, whilst the sick and three of the Grey Sisters were sent to St. Martha's Home in Liegnitz, which, for the time being, had been turned into a hospital by the ecclesiastical authorities.

²²⁸ s. *Beitraege*, Vol III, p. 382 ff

After the capitulation on May 8th, 1945, the inhabitants were given permission to return to their homes. The Grey Sisters were anxious to return to Goldberg in order to ascertain whether the church and the vicarage had been damaged. They had lived at the vicarage for a couple of years after having been turned out of their own building. In view of the conditions and the confusion and chaos which prevailed after the capitulation, they were, however, loath to return without the priest. When the Russians seized the town they had, on numerous occasions, been obliged to hide in the loft and had lived in fear and trembling of what might happen to them, but had fortunately been spared the dreadful fate which befell so many women and girls in Goldberg...

When we returned to Goldberg on May 17th, 1945, we discovered that the Russians had wrought havoc at the convent. All the rooms had been ransacked and looted and were in an indescribable condition. The church, too, had been desecrated. The altars had been moved, all the cupboards and drawers had been emptied, and the vestments and linen — the most valuable pieces were missing — were lying in a jumbled heap on the vestry floor. As a precautionary measure the priest had not locked any of the receptacles, not even the tabernacle, which was empty; he had, however, hidden a packing-case containing the chalices and various other valuables among the tombs in the old Franciscan crypt beneath the nave. The entrance to the crypt had been bricked up and was not visible, and, unlike all the vaults in the cemetery, had not been forced open. We later discovered, however, that someone had climbed through one of the tiny windows from the outside, but had apparently not been able to find anything among the tombs and had left again by the same window. We later removed the packing-case from the crypt by lifting it through the same window, which was an extremely difficult job.

As the Russian town commandant had generously assured us of his protection and given us permission to hold our services, we were able to celebrate Holy Communion again for the first time in St. Hedwig's Church on May 20th, 1945, which was Whit Sunday, after blessing the sacred precincts. Only a small congregation was present, but it was a deeply moving service. One of the parishioners, who was a teacher, played the harmonium, which we had managed to retrieve from a jumbled heap of odds and ends, which the Russians had deposited in the bedroom belonging to the priest. It was with fervent hearts that we offered our prayers to God Almighty and the Holy Ghost and asked His protection for those parishioners who had not yet returned. During the subsequent weeks the number of persons who attended divine service increased with every Sunday. Mr. P., the choirmaster, returned and managed to repair the organ, which had only been slightly damaged. Thanks to the fact that he played the organ most beautifully and the choir was soon complete again, the services were once more as elevating as they had been in former times.

It took a considerable time to tidy up the vicarage and make it habitable again. Luckily, we managed to find the church registers and

also the keys of the church amongst the piles of rubbish scattered about the vicarage. One of the rooms was turned into a parish-library, whilst three other rooms were used for meetings, religious instruction, charity purposes, and as a place to store the vestments...

Under Polish administration the hardships endured by the German population increased from one week to the next. The Poles took possession of houses and apartments belonging to Germans and turned the rightful owners out. In numerous cases the latter were not even given a chance to finish the meal they were just eating or to collect their belongings. Men and women of all ages were forced to work for the Poles. Countless cases of maltreatment occurred. Numerous men of the town and the neighbouring district were imprisoned in the notorious cellars at the headquarters of the Polish militia and Polish secret police (the latter called itself the "Gestapo") for weeks on end, on the strength of accusations which were entirely unfounded. A number of victims were buried secretly in the cemetery, whilst others who had been mishandled by the Poles required medical treatment for weeks and were looked after and bandaged by the nuns.

But an even greater disaster was to overtake the entire German population of Silesia. An order was issued, to the effect that all the German inhabitants of the town were to line up on the Square at seven o'clock in the morning, on July 7th, 1945, prior to setting off in the direction of the Goerlitz Neisse. Only those persons who could produce a certificate proving that they were employed somewhere and were indispensable were allowed to remain in the town with their families. The Polish militia actually rounded up the rest of the inhabitants and sent them out of the town and ordered them to proceed to Locwenberg. Many of them only got as far as the neighbouring villages and returned to Goldberg again after a while, only to find that their houses had been looted in the meantime or that they were denied entry. The Germans who had remained behind, however, took them in and gave them accommodation. Others of the expellees left the district for good. Some of them managed to get across the Neisse, but were then forced to move from place to place, and finally decided that a life of hardship in their native country was to be preferred to wandering about from place to place like homeless nomads. The distress and sufferings of the population of Goldberg continued to increase. Conditions became even worse when treks of refugees from Upper Silesia began to arrive in the town at the end of July, 1945. The refugees from Beuthen were cooped up in cattle-trucks for days on end. When they reached Jauer the Polish militia made them proceed on foot via Goldberg. Many of them were so exhausted that they never got as far as Goldberg. In the end, a large percentage of them stopped in the villages near Goldberg and in the town itself, and eventually found accommodation and eked out a livelihood somehow.

Epidemics, in particular dysentery and typhus, now broke out. At first, there were no coffins available and we were obliged to take the dead to the cemetery on handcarts and inter them ourselves...

It was the spirit of charity which helped us all to endure this dreadful period of hardship and suffering. Farmers and stewards on large estates, for instance, used to bring flour and other foodstuffs to town and these would then be distributed among the inhabitants. Skilled workers who were employed by the Poles and were paid in Polish money did much to relieve the distress of others. On the Feast of the Sacred Heart all the parishioners contributed some of their own meagre food supplies in order to help the poorest of the poor. They helped each other out with clothes as best as they could. Considerable sums were set aside out of the collections taken at church and were used to buy medical supplies and also for various other emergencies...

Most of the inhabitants were expelled between July 18th and July 22nd, 1946. Expulsion measures were enforced somewhat unexpectedly in Wolfsdorf, first of all. After that, the inhabitants of the town were expelled according to streets. In addition, the inhabitants of various villages in turn were also expelled every day. The expulsion measures were particularly hard on the people of the rural areas who had lived in the country, and in many cases on the same farms, all their lives. We were not allowed to leave from Goldberg station, but were forced to proceed on foot to the camp in Haynau (about 11 miles away), escorted by Polish guards. Those who were too weak, too old, or too young to walk all the way were conveyed to the camp on carts. The rest of us trudged along the highways pushing handcarts and perambulators. On the way to Haynau we got caught in a heavy thunderstorm. The usual conditions prevailed at the camp; the rooms were overcrowded; next day we were searched and our luggage was "checked" by so-called customs officials. Then we were crowded into a goods train and set off for Kohlfurt. As the expellees from Goldberg left the town in a number of separate groups, the parishioners were eventually scattered throughout various districts. That was the end of the hard times we experienced in Goldberg, but it was not the end of our hopes...

Report No. 162

The Parish of Falkenhain, near Goldberg ²²⁹

The parish of Falkenhain an der Katzbach included 376 Catholics (1942) and 3,533 persons of other denominations (1929). A church (St Hedwig's) is mentioned in historical records in 1399. The present church was built about 1300. After the fire in 1848 various alterations were made. The west portal is in the Romanesque and Early Gothic styles, the rest of the church in the Gothic and baroque styles.

From the time of our evacuation on March 5th, 1945, until the capitulation the front remained stationary. About May 10th, 1945, the various treks which had proceeded to Voigtsdorf and the northern

²²⁹ s. *Betraege*, Vol III, p. 288 ff.

region of the Sudetenland or had gone as far south as Liebau returned to Falkenhain. The trek from Niederfalkenhain and all the persons who had proceeded to Austria or Czechoslovakia, either by lorries and trains or on foot, were, of course, unable to return.

In the meantime, Russian evacuating parties had removed all the best pieces of furniture from untenanted houses and taken them to Russia. They actually drove off with two removal-vans full of furniture from the vicarage. The Russians converted the three large estates into a kolchos or collective farm, and all the inhabitants of Falkenhain who returned to the village were forced to work there. They received something to eat but no wages for their work. In September, 1945, the Russians departed, taking 9,000 cwt of grain with them...

On June 25th, 1945, a detachment of Polish soldiers arrived in Falkenhain and ordered all the inhabitants to leave, as the village was to become Polish territory. Next day, an endless trek set out in the direction of Goerlitz. When it reached Schmottseifen, however, the Polish guards escorting the trek were deprived of their firearms by Russian officers, and the inhabitants of Falkenhain, who numbered about nine hundred, were sent back to the village. And exactly the same thing happened again, a week later. From the beginning of October, 1945, onwards, more and more Polish civilians began to arrive in Falkenhain, all of them in possession of official permits to the effect that they were entitled to take over houses and furniture belonging to Germans. A period of great hardship now began for all those who had returned to the village. The Russians had already removed most of their possessions which were of any value and taken them to Russia. The Poles now seized what was left, and either turned the owners out or else made them live in the smallest room in the house. Many of the Germans were even turned out of the houses in which they had sought shelter after their own houses had been seized. If the new Polish owner suspected the former German owner of having hidden some of his possessions somewhere, he had him and his family turned out of their beds in the middle of the night by Polish militiamen. The latter then took the Germans out onto the street, made them line up against a wall, and threatened them with their revolvers. In the meantime the Polish owner searched all the cupboards and drawers in the room occupied by the Germans. The villagers were completely at the mercy of the Poles and were obliged to work for them like slaves, without however receiving any food or pay for what they did.

... I could quote innumerable cases of Germans who were tortured by Poles. In fact, there was hardly a German in the whole village who was not beaten on some occasion or other. Women, too, were maltreated, and Poles frequently hit them in the face or else dragged them by their hair. To mention but three examples of Polish methods of tormenting the Germans: they pushed one German under the weir; they made another villager lie on the ground and eat grass; on another occasion they

made one of the villagers lie on the floor and then they climbed onto the table and jumped down onto his stomach. The Germans were subjected to these and similar ignominies at all hours of the day and night, and were frequently arrested for no reason whatsoever.

The following account by Mr. Jos. J. will serve to illustrate the manner in which the Poles maltreated the Germans. "On March 9th, 1946, a Polish militiaman appeared at the house and said to me, 'German man says you got wireless.' I replied, 'German man telling lies.' The Pole thereupon kicked me in the stomach, arrested me, and took me to Schoenwaldau, to the headquarters of the so-called Polish commandant. I was interrogated for hours and they kept asking me whether I had hidden any valuables anywhere. They hit me in the face and mouth and kicked me in the stomach. Then they locked me up in a cell, which was so small that there was only enough room to stand or sit, but not to lie down, and kept me there until Sunday. On Sunday morning they made me work in the commandant's garden, together with fifteen other prisoners. At ten o'clock they took me indoors and started interrogating me again. They made me get undressed and lie down on a chair, and then they dealt me about seventy strokes with their whips. Every time I tried to get up they hit me in the face and kicked me in the stomach. I begged them twice to give me a drink of water, but they refused. When they had finished flogging me, they said, 'Now will you tell us where you've hidden your valuables?' I replied, 'I haven't hidden anything.' They then made me lie on the floor, on my stomach with the soles of my feet upwards, and one of the brutes started hitting my toes with a hammer until the bones splintered. After that they took me back to the cell and I spent the night there, shivering with cold, as the weather was icy and there was snow on the ground. On Monday morning they took me along to the forest. I was so weak that the other prisoners had to support me. When we reached the forest the Poles ordered me to drag heavy logs along the ground, which were about twenty to thirty feet long. As I was too weak to perform this task one of the Poles dealt me about seventy blows with the butt-end of his rifle. I thought my last hour had come. Two men took me back to the cellar on a handcart. On Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, they made me work in the garden. On Friday evening, at half-past eight, they took me into the kitchen (the commandant's office) again for interrogation, and then told me, 'You can go home now. You must report here at nine o'clock tomorrow morning. By then you will no doubt be able to remember where you hid your valuables!'

On the Saturday morning I went along to the headquarters of the Polish commandant and took them our electric vacuum cleaner. Thereupon they released me. I was confined to bed for weeks and hardly got any sleep at all, as my toes were festering so badly. Four months later I was taken to Kauffung, to the German surgeon there, Dr. Sch., who removed the bone-splinters. My toes then healed, but I had considerable pain in them for about a year."

Mr. B. S. was subjected to the same kind of brutal treatment, allegedly because he had ill-treated a former Polish servant-girl. There was pus dripping down his trouser-legs when they took him away to the prison in Jauer. Fortunately, I got a chance to intercede on his behalf. Soon afterwards, he was brought up for trial before a court in Liegnitz and was then released...

Report No. 163

The Parish of Haynau, near Goldberg²³⁰

The parish of Haynau included 2,214 Catholics (1942) and 23,940 persons of other denominations (1929). A church (The Immaculate Conception) is mentioned in historical records in 1299. It was rebuilt in the fifteenth century, and was Protestant from 1535 onwards, but Catholic from 1700 to 1707.

In this time of dreadful need and misery I turned my largest business in the town into a canteen for the refugees who passed through Haynau. Day and night, for weeks on end, we looked after these poor creatures who were fleeing to Germany and who arrived in the town, half-starved and shivering with cold. Their fate was indeed tragic. That was one of the reasons why we could not make up our minds to leave Haynau, but decided to stay and help our poor fellow-countrymen to the very last.

On February 9th, 1945, the Russians unexpectedly captured Haynau. We were now completely at the mercy of these brutes, and the atrocities which were committed were so dreadful that I am loath to describe them. It was as though all the forces of hell had broken loose. The propaganda which the Russians had previously dished up over the wireless turned out to be nothing but a pack of lies. We were at the mercy of this rabble day and night. At first, we hid in the cellars so that these inhuman brutes would not get hold of the womenfolk. But we were not safe there for long, as parties of Russians went about the town, setting fire to the houses. We then sought shelter on the outskirts of the town, but here, too, the Russians continued to molest us in an abominable manner... These dreadful conditions lasted until March 15th, 1945. The Russians then took us to the rear fighting zones. We were forced to trudge along on foot, dragging handcarts containing our belongings, for a whole week. They eventually took us to the Steinau district, about 33 miles away. On the way we were constantly assaulted. The Russian guards who escorted us chose the worst roads they could find and made us spend the night out in the open, with the result that we were completely at the mercy of these wild hordes. Indescribable scenes were enacted. On numerous occasions I risked my life in order to protect my fifteen-year old daughter. Ten persons died on the way. When we arrived in the village our martyrdom began anew. We were not only molested by the

²³⁰ s. *Betraege*, Vol I, pp. 215, 216, 222, and 223.

Russians, but also forced to work for them. Every day they made us walk about 19 miles in order to help unload the barges on the Oder in Steinau... We managed to escape from this inferno one night, namely on May 10th, 1945. We learnt that the war had come to an end and made for home as fast as we could. But what a dreadful scene met our eyes when we got there! Our house was a picture of desolation and destruction. The brutes had done their job thoroughly and had smashed all the furniture. The place was hardly recognizable. It was as though we had toiled and worked all our lives in vain. We had just managed to make the house fairly habitable once more when the Poles arrived in the town. We were turned out of the house within an hour and a Pole moved in. The Sisters of Charity very kindly took us in and gave us accommodation at the convent, but even here we were not safe for very long. One day, eight Poles came to the convent and searched the whole house and also the few belongings we had managed to take with us when we were turned out of our own home. Led by the Polish mayor, they then robbed us of the last of our possessions, and even went so far as to beat and mishandle my wife. Thereupon they turned us out and assigned us to quarters which were hardly fit for human habitation...

... The ever-increasing number of cases of looting and assault and the feeling of insecurity we had began to get on our nerves. It was quite a common occurrence, both during the day and at night, for all kinds of shady characters to demand entry on some pretext or other, either by beating on the door or kicking against it. Once they were in the house they threatened the inhabitants with their revolvers, searched the whole place, wrenched open the cupboards and the drawers, and removed all the things that took their fancy. Watches, jewelry, and rings were much sought-after objects. The Polish militia, which for the most part consisted of youths between the ages of seventeen and twenty-five, were also fond of participating in raids of this kind, as a rule on the pretext that the Germans whose house was searched were said to have hidden a wireless set somewhere. To mention but a few incidents that occurred: in October, 1945, for instance, the former German mayor, who had been appointed to this office temporarily by the Russian commandant in May, 1945, was attacked in his own home and shot. All the cupboards containing linen and clothing were looted. One evening, in March, 1946, two young Poles appeared at the house of Mr. Neumann, the spokesman of the German population. Threatening him with a revolver, they proceeded to empty the wardrobe and made him and his wife remove the rings they were wearing. In addition, they made him take off his jacket and his shoes. He was unable to go to work for several days as he had nothing to wear. No attempt was ever made on the part of the Polish authorities to find out who the offenders were on these two occasions.

Many Germans, who had either endured dreadful hardships under Polish terrorism or had been deprived and robbed of all their possessions when they were turned out of their homes, left Haynau of their own accord and crossed the Neisse and went to Germany. My sister also left

the town of her own free will in November, 1945. As a result of being raped by Russians several times when the town was captured, she contracted venereal disease and was urgently in need of medical treatment, which it was impossible to get in Haynau, as conditions in this respect were dreadful. Prior to January, 1946, there was only one German doctor in the whole town, which, at that time, numbered 6,000 inhabitants (Germans and Poles). He constantly had to be at the service of the Russians and the Poles, and was only allowed to treat German patients in his spare time. Russians and Poles who went to his surgery had priority before Germans. In addition, there were no medical supplies to be had. The Polish dispensary only had a small stock of medical supplies, and in any case these were so dear that most of the Germans could not afford to buy them. Towards the end of the summer of 1945 a dreadful typhus epidemic broke out among the German population, which was not surprising since the Germans were practically starving. Owing to the fact that the necessary medical supplies were not available, a very large percentage of persons, especially young persons, succumbed to this disease. No medical care whatsoever was available for typhus patients in the villages. The Polish doctor for the district of Goldberg had no means at his disposal to check the epidemic. It was not until November, 1945, that preventive measures were introduced and some of the inhabitants inoculated.

Report No. 164

The Parish of Hohenfriedeberg, near Jauer²³¹

The parish of Hohenfriedeberg included 300 Catholics (1942) and 2,141 persons of other denominations (1929). A church (St Michael's) is mentioned in historical records in 1307. The present church was built in the Gothic style in the fifteenth century.

... In February, 1945, orders were issued to the civilian population to leave the district. Some of the inhabitants fled to the districts of Landeshut and Trautenau. Others, however, decided to remain in Hohenfriedeberg, since they ran the risk of falling into the hands of the Russians wherever they went. The parish-priest and the teacher at the Catholic school were among those who remained behind. On May 7th, 1945, the Russians broke through the German front at Jauer, Rohnstock, and Striegau, and the German commandant of Hohenfriedeberg issued an order that the rest of the inhabitants of the town and the people in the neighbouring villages were to leave at once. Civilians, drawing small handcarts containing their belongings, and German soldiers who were fleeing from the enemy moved in an endless column in the direction

²³¹ s. *Beitraege*, Vol III, p. 388 ff

of Landeshut. Some of the civilians, including the priest, stopped in the next village, Hohenpetersdorf, and spent the night there. During the night the German soldiers and some of the inhabitants set off in the direction of Alt-Reichenau and Landeshut. A number of civilians, about sixty altogether, including women, children, elderly men, and also the priest and the teacher from the Catholic school in Hohenfriedeberg, remained behind in Hohenpetersdorf, and, at the advice of a German general staff officer, took refuge in a sand-pit in the forest, not far from the village. We could hear the thunder of cannon and the detonations caused by demolition operations. We could see a number of fires in the distance, and a few planes, flying in the direction of Waldenburg, passed over our heads. Despite the fact that it was a lovely spring day, there was something sinister in the air. At about six o'clock in the evening, on May 8th, we heard the sound of shouting and shooting in the direction of the village, and not long afterwards several Russian soldiers appeared on the scene and confronted us in the sand-pit. "Kneel down!" they shouted. We were so terrified that most of us wept. We knelt down, with the priest in our midst, and he said the general absolution. The Russians kept putting their revolvers close to our heads, but they did not fire any shots. "All Hitler!" they shouted. After what seemed like hours of suspense to us, they eventually ordered us to stand up and go back to the village. They kept shouting, "Watch! Watch!", and after we had handed over our rings and watches to them, we proceeded to Hohenpetersdorf in silence, like a funeral procession. When we reached the village the Russians made us take up our quarters in some of the houses, but we were not allowed to lock any of the doors. Many of the women and girls still cannot bear to think of how they were raped by Russian soldiers. Next day, May 9th, we did not venture to go out of the house. The Russians came to fetch some of the men and made them help to round up the cattle in the village, prior to its being taken away. They even made the priest, who was sixty-seven, work as a drover. As he no longer had a watch to give them, they tormented him by kicking him. On May 11th, 1945, we ventured to return to Hohenfriedeberg. When we reached the town, we discovered that many of the houses had either been destroyed by fire or else had been damaged by shells and bombs. The roof and the brickwork of the Catholic parish-church had also been damaged. The Protestant church, and in particular the tower, which had been used as a German look-out post, had suffered considerable damage. Most of the windows at the vicarage and the church had been smashed. The vicarage, like all the houses in the town, was in a state of utter chaos and confusion. All the rooms were littered with broken bottles, vestments, and various articles of clothing. Cupboards had been knocked over, drawers had been wrenched out, and most of the contents were missing! — On our way through the town we found one of our parishioners, Mr. Friese, murdered. His skull had been smashed. He was seventy-six and had refused to leave the town when the evacuation order was issued. With the aid of Mr. V., the grave-digger, who had also ventured to return to Hohenfriedeberg, we buried poor, old Mr. Friese in the

churchyard. As Mr. V. was on his way to the churchyard, in order to dig the grave, he encountered two Russian soldiers. They made him sit down, take off his boots, and hand them over! — After we had locked the doors of the houses as best as we could, the three of us returned to Hohenpetersdorf. For a couple of days the womenfolk used to go to town with us every morning and spend the day cleaning the houses and making them habitable again. In the evening we always used to go back to Hohenpetersdorf. Eventually, however, we decided to move into our houses in Hohenfriedeberg again. We kept the front door barricaded both during the day and at night. For a couple of months, until we were finally expelled from Silesia, we eked out a miserable existence and constantly lived in fear and trembling of what might happen to us. Women and girls frequently sought shelter at the vicarage to avoid being molested by Russian soldiers. All the windows on the ground floor at the vicarage were fitted with iron bars and shutters, which afforded a certain amount of protection. During the summer of 1945 we repaired the roof of the church and nailed up the windows that had been broken, with cardboard. At the end of June, 1945, the Poles settled in the town...

The Poles took over the administration of Silesia, and the Germans were now completely at their mercy and were deprived of all their rights. The following incident shows how the Germans were treated. One day, in September, 1945, I went to visit a family I knew in Boernchen, about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles away from Hohenfriedeberg, in the hopes of being able to obtain a few tomatoes there. As I was walking through the village two Russian soldiers drove up with a horse-and-cart. They stopped me and asked me whether I was a German. When I said, "Yes," one of them hit me in the face, searched all my pockets and removed the contents. When I ventured to point out to them that a proclamation by Marshal Stalin had been published in the Waldenburg newspaper, to the effect that the war was now over and the population was to be allowed to go about its business in peace, one of the soldiers took a step backwards and lunged at me again with his fist. He hit me with such force that the blood immediately began to stream down my face. Then they made me get onto the cart and drove off in the direction of Hohenfriedeberg. When we were about halfway back to the town they pushed me off the cart with such force that I fell onto the road and slithered a couple of yards. I had fallen down with such force that I was at first afraid I had broken my collar-bone, but fortunately this was not the case. The German inhabitants of the town were terrified of going out of the house. Dreadful conditions prevailed; the Germans no longer had any rights whatsoever...

All the Germans in Hohenfriedeberg were eventually expelled. They are now living scattered throughout various districts in Germany, and most of them are eking out a miserable existence. The only thing that gives them courage to go on living is the hope that some day they will be able to return to Silesia again. And that is the prayer that we all of us ask God to grant!

*Report No. 165***The Parish of Pombsen, near Jauer** ²³²

The parish of Pombsen included 285 Catholics (1942) and 808 persons of other denominations (1929). A church (St Michael's) is mentioned in historical records in 1335. The present church was built in the Gothic style at the beginning of the fourteenth century. Until 1810 Pombsen belonged to the Cistercian Monastery in Leubus.

On February 20th, 1945, orders were issued by the German forces that Pombsen was to be evacuated, and the village now became part of the fighting front. The sick and the aged and women with small children were taken to Landeshut on lorries and were going to wait there for the rest of us, but to this day we have never seen any of them again¹.

On February 21st, 1945, the rest of the villagers, including the priest, set off from Pombsen in a large trek. They proceeded to the Sudetenland and Czechoslovakia, but here they gradually became separated as the result of epidemics, sickness, and death. Father Richter used to go from village to village, visiting the members of his parish.

On May 16th, 1945, orders were issued to the effect that we must leave Czechoslovakia within twenty-four hours' time. We made the return journey on foot, and the first two days we walked about 33 miles each day, which was extremely exhausting. On the following days, however, we walked shorter distances.

We reached Pombsen on May 22nd. When we got there, we discovered that the vicarage was no longer habitable. Several families had already returned and more continued to arrive every day. All the windows at the vicarage had been smashed, and two window-frames had been wrenched out completely. All the doors had been damaged. All the rooms had been ransacked and looted and were in a filthy condition. The carcass of a cow had been left to rot in the cellar. The church-registers and records, containing the names of those who had been confirmed, had been torn to bits. Prayer-books lay scattered about in the yard and the house, in a damaged and soiled condition. Most of the crucifixes and statues of the Holy Virgin had been broken. We were obliged to sleep at a neighbour's house for a fortnight until the kitchen, the study, and the priest's bedroom at the vicarage could be made fairly habitable again. It was not safe for women to go out of the house. Russians and Poles raided and looted the houses in the village practically every day and pursued the girls. We were deprived of the few things we had managed to rescue, and the marauders even stole things like soutanes and other articles of clothing. The priest was robbed of practically all he possessed, and, in addition, was constantly subjected to all kinds of indignities. On one occasion, he was arrested by Russian soldiers, who threatened him with their revolvers and were going to take him to Breslau, where he was to help clear away debris. Fortunately, however, he managed to escape in time. — The interior of the church was

²³² s. *Beitraege*, Vol. II, p. 510 ff

a picture of chaos and filth, and an orgy had apparently been held there. All the vestments were torn and lay scattered about on the floor. The silk lining had been ripped out of one of the copes which was quite new. The valuable mass vestments of gold brocade and several other vestments were missing. Most of the sacred linen, of which there was a large quantity, had also been stolen. The majority of things that were missing had been stolen by Poles. Some of the lace which had been torn off the albs, as well as altar-cloths, and choristers' surplices were later found in ditches by the roadside. Some of them had been used as baby's napkins. — The altars were, for the most part, undamaged. There was a large hole in the roof of the church, and a small shell, which had failed to explode, was later found among the rafters, exactly over the high altar. The damage to the roof was soon repaired. Some of the young girls in the parish helped to tidy up the church and decorated it with flowers, and we were once more able to celebrate early mass every morning. Fortunately, we had taken the chalices and the paten used by the priest, when visiting the sick, with us when we fled from the village, otherwise they, too, would no doubt have been stolen, as was the case in the neighbouring parish of Schlaup. A new monstrance, a valuable chalice, and the precious monstrance of Wahlstatt had been buried for safety, prior to our leaving, and they were still in the same hiding-place when we returned...

On July 25th, 1945, after giving us only ten minutes' warning, the Poles chased us out of the village, threatening us with their cudgels and rifles. They told us that we were to cross the Neisse, but we slunk off into the forest and hid there. Some of the villagers were taken to Lauban and even further. We lay in hiding in the forest, in the pouring rain, until July 27th. At about five o'clock that afternoon we returned to the village. It was a picture of destruction and desolation. All our previous efforts to repair the damage done by the Russians and Poles and tidy the place up again had been in vain. The streets were littered with things that had been damaged and smashed. The Poles had stolen everything of any value that had been left behind by the inhabitants, when they had been forced to leave. Hardly had we settled down in the village once more, when the Russians and Poles started molesting the girls. Several girls were, in fact, raped when the villagers were evicted by the Poles. As the inhabitants were terrified of being molested and attacked, several families, usually five or six, now started living in one house all together, so as to have a certain amount of protection...

On November 15th, 1945, a horde of about twenty to twenty-five Poles took up their quarters at the vicarage. The priest was suffering from a severe cold and was ill in bed when they arrived. They behaved in a most brutal manner. They got the priest out of bed and made him stand about in the cold, half-dressed, whilst they shouted at him and insulted him... ²³³

²³³ As a result, Father Eberhard Richter's condition grew worse, and he died on November 29, 1945, at half-past nine in the morning. He was buried on December 3, 1945.

On January 28th, 1946, despite the fact that it was bitterly cold weather, many of the German families in Pombsen were turned out of the village within about five minutes' time. They were only allowed to take a few of their belongings with them, and were literally chased out of their homes by the Poles, who jeered at them and threatened them... Practically every day, Germans were robbed and beaten by Poles... Typhus and starvation claimed many victims in the parish of Pombsen.

Report No. 166

The Parish of Schlaup, near Jauer²³⁴

The parish of Schlaup included 1,835 Catholics (1942) and 1,120 persons of other denominations (1929). A church (The Assumption of the Virgin Mary) is mentioned in historical records in 1202. The present church was built in the late Mediaeval and baroque styles in the eighteenth century. Until 1810 Schlaup belonged to the Cistercian Monastery in Leubus.

May 20th, 1945. When we returned home on May 20th, 1945, which was Whit Sunday, we were horrified to see all the havoc and destruction that had been wrought. All that remained of many of the houses was a heap of ruins. The church-tower had been hit by shells, the roof had been damaged, and all the windows and also the organ had been smashed. The vestments and sacred vessels had either been stolen or damaged so badly that they could no longer be used. The tabernacle had been forced open. The vicarage was in such a dreadful condition that it was no longer habitable. Some of the parishioners very kindly gave the priest accommodation. It took weeks to clean up the vicarage and make it fairly habitable again. During the day and at night we were constantly molested and assaulted by marauding Russians. On one occasion, a Russian, armed with a revolver, dragged the priest out of the vestry and threatened to shoot him, because he was of the opinion that the priest had hidden a girl, whom he was seeking, in the church. Sixty Ukrainians, who took up their quarters in the village in order to help with the harvest, terrorized the inhabitants of Schlaup and the neighbouring villages for weeks on end...

On June 24th, 1945, all the German inhabitants of the village were expelled by the Poles. Soon after leaving Schlaup we were attacked and robbed by Ukrainians. We trekked along the roads for a week, spending the night in barns, sheds, dilapidated houses, and out in the open, until we reached the outskirts of Lauban. We were then allowed to turn back. When we reached Schlaup we discovered to our dismay that all the houses in the village had been ransacked and looted again in the meantime...

... More and more farms were now seized by the Poles, and the owners and their families were either forced to live crowded together in one small room or else turned out. The Germans were treated like

²³⁴ s. *Beitraege*, Vol I, p 229 ff.

slaves and were forced to work for the Poles; they were beaten, arrested by the militia, locked up in the notorious cellars at militia headquarters, and mishandled in a most inhuman way. The Polish militia even went so far as to arrest schoolboys and keep them locked up for months on end. When their families were expelled they were not even allowed to contact them. In November, 1945, Mr. R., the choirmaster in Schlaup, was arrested by the Polish militia and taken to the prison at Jauer. At that time a number of schoolboys were also detained there and the Poles made them beat Mr. R., their former teacher, until he was so badly maimed that he had to be taken to hospital. He had by no means recovered when the militia arrested him a second time. The Poles kicked and flogged him, despite the fact that he was still so ill that he could hardly stand, and took him off to prison again. That was the last that was ever heard of him. According to one of the prisoners, he was buried in the prison-yard...

December 18th, 1945: At noon a party of nine armed Poles, militiamen and civilians, suddenly appeared at the vicarage and started searching the house for firearms. Needless to say, their efforts met with no success, but they pocketed whatever took their fancy. To the horror of the parishioners, they then arrested the priest and took him to Jauer, where he was locked up in the notorious cellars. He was later interrogated and the Poles accused him of having been a member of the National Socialist Party and the Werwolf Defense Organization, etc., like "all big priests." The priest had some difficulty in convincing them that he was a Catholic priest, that he had been opposed to the National Socialist Party and that he had never had anything whatsoever to do with such organizations, but had, on the contrary, always tried to help the Polish civilian workers, had even learnt Polish, confessed them, and held services for them, and had thus run a very great risk himself. After a lot of argument the Poles were finally obliged to release him. Incidentally, before he was released, the gaoler told the schoolboys who were imprisoned in the cellars, "You must eat a lot today, because your priest is here, and you'll have to give him a beating later on." After this incident the parishioners lived in fear and trembling of what the Poles might do to the priest, especially as there was a secret spy in the village who wished him ill... One of the Poles, who had outdone the others in insulting the priest when he was interrogated and had threatened him with his right arm all the time, was killed four days later when a mine exploded. His right arm and his face were torn to pieces...

On August 3rd, 1946, we learnt that we were to be expelled from Schlaup next day. Next morning (Sunday, August 4th), after waiting about in the village for hours, we were taken to the camp at Jauer. On the following day we were checked and searched and "relieved" of many of our belongings; then we were put into cattle-trucks, and the train finally set off in the evening for Stadthagen in the province of Schaumburg-Lippe, via Kohlfurt, Magdeburg, and Mariental. We reached Stadthagen in the middle of the night and were then split up into various groups and assigned to different districts... We find it hard to reconcile

ourselves to the fact that we, who have been forced to give up our homes and all we possessed, are looked upon as second-rate, in fact, as being half-Polish, and merely tolerated by the people here, who have never been obliged to sacrifice their homes and their possessions, but are still enjoying peace-time conditions. Were it not for our faith in the Lord and our hope that conditions will some day improve, we should most certainly despair.

Report No. 167

The Parish of Birngruetz, near Loewenberg ²³⁵

The parish of Birngruetz included 644 Catholics (1942) and 371 persons of other denominations (1929). A church (St Mary's) existed as early as the Middle Ages. The present church was built in the baroque style during the years 1765 to 1768. Until 1810 it belonged to the Benedictine Convent in Liebenthal.

It was to be foreseen that the priests would play an important part in public life after the collapse of the National Socialist regime, in particular in those towns and villages where the parishioners all held the same political views. Time alone will show whether the priests acted for the best when, in the spring of 1945, the majority of them decided to remain in their parishes, that is to say in cases where it was left to them to make a decision in this respect. Many of the priests in the arch-diocese of Breslau and their parishioners allowed the Russian front to "overtake" them, and even though some of the parishioners did not share this fate with the priest, all of them were deeply grateful to him for remaining with his flock to the end...

The Russians and Poles in no way interfered with our services, which we were allowed to hold regularly, as in former times. It is true that the Russians relieved the priest of some of his personal belongings, but they never raided or searched the churches or the vicarage...

As the Russians had not deprived the priest of his horses and carriage he was now obliged to place them at the disposal of the Polish settlers and administrative authorities. In fact, they even made him do menial work in this respect. For months on end he had to drive to the station to pick up Polish settlers, take them to their quarters, and load and unload their luggage. In addition, he had to take the milk and butter from the village to town or to the dairy, as he was the only German in Birngruetz who still owned some horses, and the Polish settlers refused to use the horses they had "taken over" from the Germans for such tasks as long as there was a German in the village who could place his horses at their disposal. For over a year the priest was obliged to drive members of the Polish administration to town to attend meetings and take their wives for pleasure-trips, and was forced to sit on the driver's seat attired in his robes and wearing a white band on his sleeve to show that he was

a German. He was intentionally subjected to such indignities by the Poles, not so much because he was a priest, but because he was a German and one of the intelligentsia.

His life was only in danger on one occasion, namely when he lodged a written and also a verbal complaint against a Polish militia official with the Polish administrative chief of the district. The militia official in question had, in the course of one afternoon, wounded twelve elderly persons in the village so severely, that in ten cases the doctor had to stitch their wounds, in addition, he had felled the ambulance-man who had gone to the aid of the wounded, and had also raped a fourteen-year old girl. As the priest had signed his written complaint, the militia official found out who had lodged the same, and it was only thanks to the intervention of the mayor that the priest escaped being executed. It is true that the vicarage was then raided and looted, but that was a relatively harmless affair...

The church and the vicarage in Birngruetz were not damaged during the war.

With the help of the administrative head of the district of Warburg and various other friends in Westphalia, the priest managed to find accommodation for all his parishioners, when they were expelled from Birngruetz, in four villages located close together. Incidentally, whilst he was at the expellees' camp he personally took steps to ensure that all his parishioners were assigned to quarters which were in keeping with their manner of life. And thus the geographical and spiritual unity of his parish has been preserved...

Report No. 168

The Parish of Kleinroehrsdorf, near Loewenberg ²³⁶

The parish of Kleinroehrsdorf included 570 Catholics (1942) and 981 persons of other denominations (1929). A church (St. Felix's and St. Adaeus') is mentioned in historical records in 1315. The presbytery of the present church was added at the end of the eighteenth century. Until 1810 it belonged to the Benedictine Convent in Liebenthal.

... The village was occupied by the Russians on May 9th, 1945, but no atrocities occurred and the population was not molested. In fact, there was only one single case of rape. — The church was neither damaged nor looted. ²³⁷

The Poles, many of whom had been employed on the farms in the neighbourhood until May 8th, were, however, a source of terror to the villagers. When the Russians arrived in the village the Poles welcomed them as their liberators. A thirteen-year old boy who was still wearing part of his Hitler Youth uniform was promptly shot by Poles. They

²³⁶ s. *Beitraege*, Vol. III, p. 324 ff

²³⁷ After hearing the news of the armistice on the wireless, the inhabitants of Kleinroehrsdorf hoisted white flags on all the houses in the village.

raided and looted all the farms. They threatened to shoot Mr. B., our neighbour, because he had not been particularly well-disposed towards the Polish workers, but he fled to the vicarage and sought shelter there. One of the Poles took Mr. B.'s cart and drove off to Schmottseifen. On the way, however, he drove over a mine and was killed by the explosion... When the first lot of Russian troops arrived in the village all the foreign workers who had been employed in digging trenches (Italians, who numbered about two hundred and had been living in the barn at the vicarage, Frenchmen, and Poles) dispersed and split up into gangs that prowled the village and the surrounding district, robbing and stealing.

... At half-past eight in the evening, on June 24th, the Poles rounded up all the villagers for an "Adolf Hitler March". With much difficulty the priest managed to obtain a cart to convey his father, who was ninety-one, and the rest of the aged and infirm, who were not able to walk. We had to be ready to leave the house in twenty minutes' time. Escorted by armed Poles, we trekked as far as Greiffenberg, via Schmottseifen. On the way to Greiffenberg the Poles robbed us of some of our belongings. We spent the night out in the open, in a field, not far from Greiffenberg. The inhabitants of all the other villages in the vicinity had also been rounded up by the Poles and taken to the same field. The Poles — most of them were brutal young fellows — kept beating and tormenting us to keep us in a crowd... They intended sending us over the Neisse... In the evening we learnt that Stalin had issued an order that we were to be sent back home again... at five o'clock in the morning, whilst the Poles were still asleep, we set off for home by a different route. Most of us were completely exhausted, as we only had a few handcart between us and were obliged to carry our belongings on our backs. A doll's pram I had managed to get hold of in Schmottseifen served as a handcart for my suitcase. It took us three days to get back to Kleinroehrsdorf. When we arrived there we found that the Poles had meanwhile wrought havoc in all the houses, they had ransacked and looted all the rooms, and had smashed all the furniture, the doors, and the windows; they had driven the cattle away; they had smashed all the crockery and had given full vent to their vindictiveness by acts of wilful destruction (as for instance by pouring stewed bilberries into beds, etc.). The owners of the house in which we had found temporary accommodation and the priest had been robbed of all their clothes. It took us nearly a week to make the place as habitable again as we could, with the few broken-down pieces of furniture that were left...

On August 19th, 1947, we were expelled by the Poles... We were put into cattle-trucks, thirty-five persons in each truck, and travelled from the Polish to the German district of Goerlitz, which took us a fortnight, as we travelled via Kohlfurt and the train was continually being shunted onto a siding, where we then remained for hours on end and for a couple of nights, in fact, until an engine arrived to take us a short distance again. We eventually reached Naumburg on the Saale and were taken to the quarantine camp there...

*Report No. 169***The Parish of Langwasser, near Loewenberg**²³⁸

The parish of Langwasser included 1,013 Catholics (1942) and 1,029 persons of other denominations (1929). A church (St Nicholas') is mentioned in historical records in 1373. The present church was built in 1705. Part of it was destroyed by fire in 1744, but was rebuilt. Certain additions were made in 1864 and 1865. Until 1810 it belonged to the Benedictine Convent in Liebenthal.

... On May 8th, 1945, the day of the capitulation, the Russians entered the village as the victors. All the inhabitants had decided to remain in Langwasser prior to the arrival of the Russians. The foreign civilian workers (Ukrainians and Poles) assembled in the brewery near the church and showered flowers upon the Russian commissar. They were then asked how they had been treated by the mayor and the inhabitants of Langwasser. They told the Russians that they had been treated quite well, whereupon the latter promised to treat the inhabitants of the village leniently. Nevertheless, they looted all the houses in the village during the next few weeks, and also molested the women and girls, but not many cases of rape occurred. On one occasion, however, I was present when a Russian soldier asked a refugee woman in the entrance-hall at the vicarage how many children she had. When she told him seven, he replied, "You can have eight!" On another occasion, a farmer's wife brought her twenty-year old daughter to the vicarage in a pitiful condition. Her hair was dishevelled and her face was streaked with dirt. She had been stopped by some Russians in a field, and when she tried to defend herself they mishandled her; they stuffed a snail down her throat and made her swallow it. As a result, she had to have medical attention. On the whole, however, the Russians behaved in a fairly humane manner towards the villagers, in particular towards children. — About four weeks later Polish militia arrived in the village, but they were by no means as humane as the Russians had been. During the months that followed, more and more Polish soldiers arrived in Langwasser, and it was not long before Polish civilians, who had been expelled from Galicia, began to settle in the village. Various farms were assigned to them, and the Germans were powerless to do anything in the matter and were forced to work on their own farms as labourers for the Poles. Violent quarrels between the Germans and the Poles were a common occurrence. The Poles would demand all sorts of things, and the Germans would either refuse or were unable to give them what they demanded. Thereupon the Poles would either start beating the Germans or else they would fetch the notorious militia, who then robbed and beat the Germans. Incidents of this kind occurred practically every day. The Germans frequently called in one of the nurses in Langwasser who could speak Polish to come to their aid. On several occasions the nurse in question managed to settle the dispute, but this was not always the case. As a

²³⁸ s. *Beitraege*, Vol III, p 355 ff.

rule, the Poles told the nurses to mind their own business, and they, the Poles, would mind their own business, too, and do as they thought fit...

The villagers lived in a state of constant fear and terror. On Sunday, June 24th, 1945, Polish militia evicted all the inhabitants from the village. The only persons who were allowed to remain in Langwasser were the nurses, and, thanks to their intercession, the priest and his family. All the villagers had to line up in the street prior to leaving the village. Most of them only took a small handcart, containing a few of their belongings, with them. At about noon they set off in a westerly direction... On Friday, June 29th, they returned to Langwasser from Seidenberg on the Goerlitz Neisse.

Langwasser seemed very strange during the five days that they were absent. Practically everyone had been forced to leave and most of the houses were deserted. Many of the villagers had let their cows out of the sheds before leaving Langwasser, so that the animals would not starve. Dogs howled for their owners, doves fluttered about the farms, and cattle wandered about the gardens and streets. Those of the inhabitants who had been allowed to remain in the village tried to feed the animals and milk the cows as best as they could, for at that time there were only a few Polish soldiers in the village, but no Polish civilians, who might possibly have looked after the deserted farms and the cattle, whilst the rightful owners were being driven towards the Neisse and had nothing whatsoever to eat. When the Germans were allowed to return to Langwasser again they found their houses in a dreadful condition, for the Poles had ransacked and looted all the rooms most thoroughly in the meantime.

A fortnight later, on a Sunday again, the Poles once more organized a so-called "Hitler March" in order to have a chance to loot the houses of the Germans in the meantime. On this occasion, however, the villagers returned home again two days later.

At first there was only a small Polish militia unit stationed in the village, but from July to October, 1945, more and more Poles arrived in Langwasser. Many of them came from the territories which had now become Russian, and on arriving in Langwasser seized one house and farm after another. As the village had hardly felt the effects of the war at all and none of the houses had suffered any damage, the Poles swarmed into our district first of all. Other districts in Silesia, for instance, were by no means overrun with Poles to such an extent. The Poles settled down in the houses and farms belonging to the Germans; they acted as though they were the rightful owners, and, at best, allowed the German owners to work for them and in return gave them a meal...

At about seven o'clock in the evening, on Saturday, July 6th, 1946, various families in the village were informed that they were to line up on the road to Liebenthal next morning at ten o'clock, prior to leaving the village. About 600 persons, that is to say approximately two-thirds of the population, were expelled on this occasion...

The militia had already been enquiring for the priest when he came out of church at about nine o'clock on the Sunday morning, and there was not much time to spare as some of the carts were already standing in readiness to depart. It was a tragic sight. A few of the people had horses and carts on which to convey the luggage belonging to the expelled, but most of the villagers only possessed small handcarts, which they had now loaded with the last of their possessions. Most of us were obliged to trudge along the roads on foot, as only the sick and the aged were allowed to ride on the carts. The priest was also allowed to ride on one of the carts. Shortly before we left the village, the Polish mayor went up to the priest and said good-bye to him in Polish. When we were finally all assembled the procession set off slowly. Although most of the people had lived in the village all their lives and had hardly ever left it, although none of them knew whether they would ever see it again, and although they had been forced to bid farewell to their property, their church, and the graves of their loved ones, hardly any of them shed any tears as we moved out of the village. Many of them hoped they would soon be able to return home once more. For the majority of them, their expulsion meant the end of the slavery and inhuman treatment they had been forced to endure for months, and they breathed with relief when once they were over the Neisse, the river which had played so important a part in deciding their fate...

Report No. 170

The Parish of Klein-Helmsdorf, near Schoenau an der Katzbach²³⁹

The parish of Klein-Helmsdorf included 913 Catholics (1942) and 39 persons of other denominations (1929). A church (St Aegidius) is mentioned in historical records in 1399. The present church was built in the baroque style in 1735. Until 1810 it belonged to the Cistercian Abbey in Leubus.

... From November, 1945, onwards my house (and business premises) was occupied by Poles. On January 15th, 1946, a Pole by the name of Stanislaus Cendrowski, his wife and two children, and his brother-in-law moved into the house. After he had seized the best rooms and the best furniture for his own use, he and his family proceeded to open and loot all the other cupboards and drawers, etc., in the house. They found the money, the watches, and our wedding-rings which we had hidden for safety because we were afraid the Russians might take them, and kept them. They also deprived us of all the food supplies they found in the house. My wife was beaten and kicked by Cendrowski for no reason whatsoever.

At five o'clock in the morning, on June 26th, 1946, Cendrowski came and told us that a lot of people were having to leave the village

²³⁹ s. *Beitraege*, Vol. III, p. 397 ff.

that day, but that we could stay. At half-past five he repeated what he had previously said, but ten minutes later he suddenly appeared together with another Pole and informed us that we had to line up in the village at six o'clock and were going to be turned out. As the place where we had to line up was a quarter of an hour's walk away from the house, we only had five minutes left in which to pack up our belongings. As there were five of us, we could only gather a few things together in great haste. Meanwhile the Poles were already snatching hold of all the things they could get their hands on and removing them to the rooms in the house which they occupied. They told us that we should probably have to walk to Hirschberg, about nineteen miles away, and since we should therefore not be able to carry much, we had better leave our belongings behind and only take a little food with us. Whilst we were waiting at the spot where we had to assemble, prior to leaving the village, the Poles put up a notice to the effect that the British Occupation authorities would not allow refugees to enter their zone unless they brought their own bedding and cooking utensils with them. We all of us protested violently and ran back home in order to get the necessary belongings. When we reached the house, however, we were denied admission, and so most of us were obliged to set out without being allowed to take our bedding and cooking utensils with us. Despite the fact that I was known to be a violent anti-Nazi and had even been persecuted by the Gestapo and dismissed from my post as registrar, and, in addition, possessed excellent testimonials from Polish civilian internees and prisoners, I was subjected to this sort of treatment by the Poles in Klein-Helmsdorf. The following cases will serve to show how they tormented us. I should like to state in advance that our village was always held in ill repute as being anti-Nazi and that the Party never succeeded in organizing a local Party group, and that, incredible though it may seem, there were only two members of the S. A. and one member of the S. S. in the whole village, despite the fact that the population numbered practically a thousand.

1) Mr. Josef R. was attacked by Poles whilst at the house of Mr. Josef K., the farmer, and was beaten for no reason whatsoever, until he was unconscious.

2) August F. was beaten on the head to such an extent that he sustained concussion of the brain and lost his power of speech for some time.

3) Mrs. D., the wife of the innkeeper, had her leg broken in several places and the bone splintered by a Pole, living in the house, who kicked her. After that he dragged her along the street by her hair and then left her lying on the road. I visited her whilst she was in the hospital in Kauffung and can attest to these facts. There was no reason whatsoever for this treatment.

4) Mr. Paul R. was locked up in a house by the Poles for no reason at all. They kicked him with such force that three of his ribs

were broken. I visited him after this incident and, in this case, too, can attest to these facts.

5) Mr. Karl M., who was on duty as a watchman, was beaten and mishandled by Poles.

6) Mr. Paul D. was beaten by Poles in front of my house and knocked down several times. He was very deaf and had apparently not taken any notice when the Poles called to him to stop.

7) On several occasions I saw young Polish fellows hit people in the street and knock them down because they had failed to salute. Incidentally, no orders were ever issued that we had to salute the Poles.

Part of the churchyard surrounding the church was demolished by the Poles, including some graves which were quite new. Polish youths then kicked some of the skulls about and played at football with them. The German parish-priest, Father Kube, thereupon reported the matter to the Polish authorities, with the result that the Poles constantly persecuted him. Despite the fact that he was a dying man, he was forced to share our fate when we were expelled. He was in the same cattle-truck as I on the journey. He died in Otterndorf the day we arrived there, and was later buried there.²⁴⁰

This is only a brief account of all the hardship and suffering we were forced to endure. There was hardly a house in the village in which the inhabitants were not beaten by the Poles at some time or other. Despite the fact that it was very hard to have to bid farewell to our homes, our farms, and our native village, we were all of us relieved and happy to think that we were escaping from this inferno at last. We had never felt safe, for the Poles arrested people on all sorts of trumped-up charges — because a cartridge had been found in their garden or because they had allegedly made some remark or other — and imprisoned them for weeks and months in the cellars in Jauer and Goldberg, and used the same methods which had been applied in the concentration camps in Dachau and Auschwitz. All those who were arrested had to swear on oath that they would never talk about the treatment they had been subjected to. The Poles knew only too well that the way they treated the Germans was both inhuman and unjust.

The Poles did not know very much about farming, and most of them did very little work. They distilled alcohol all day long and at night, too, and were constantly getting drunk. When they were intoxicated they were more brutal than ever and ill-treated anyone they could get hold of. Woe betide the victim, however, if he reported them; he would be persecuted in every way imaginable, for the Poles always managed to find some reason or other for tormenting the Germans.

²⁴⁰ Father Heinrich Kube (born on May 17, 1882, ordained on June 23, 1906), parish-priest of Klein-Helmsdorf, died in Otterndorf-Stade hospital on July 3, 1946, from the effects of the journey he was forced to undertake when he was expelled by the Poles

Report No. 171

The Parish of Hirschberg in the Riesengebirge²⁴¹

The population of the town of Hirschberg in the Riesengebirge included 6,000 Catholics (1942) and 29,598 persons of other denominations (1929). A church (St Erasmus' and St Pancras') is mentioned in historical records in 1288. The present church was built in the Gothic style during the second half of the fourteenth century and in the fifteenth century.

... After shelling the town for two hours the Russians seized Hirschberg on Tuesday evening, May 8th, 1945. They promptly started looting houses and raping women and girls, and even the inmates of the home for the aged. Only a few houses were damaged in the course of the shelling. Some of the windows of the parish-church were smashed, but the damage was soon repaired. The Russian commandant was very obliging. He granted an audience to the municipal administration, which had been provisionally set up and consisted of anti-Nazis, and also to the clergymen of both confessions, and gave permission for the church-bells to be rung and for services to be held without any further restrictions.

The Poles also arrived in Hirschberg in May, 1945. At first there were only a few of them and they were very reserved in their behaviour, but it was not long before they began to swarm into the town and behaved in a most ruthless manner. They took over the municipal and district administration, and turned the Germans out of their jobs, administrative and otherwise, out of their businesses, and their houses. The Germans were deprived of all their rights and also of all their personal and real estate. With but a few exceptions, no one, not even the Polish priests, seemed to think these measures an injustice..

With the help of the militia, the Polish priest who had settled in the town, Father Titus, seized the large parish buildings, which included the offices of the charity society and the church treasury, several club-rooms, and also a number of private apartments. He also seized all the inventory, ecclesiastical and private alike, turned the house into a Polish vicarage, and seized half the rooms in the vicarage proper, too, for his own use. He even refused to allow the German priest to enter or use the rooms where the church-registers and parochial records were kept. The German priest thereupon lodged a complaint with the Apostolic Administrator, Karl Milik, in Breslau, but no notice whatsoever was taken; on the contrary, Father Titus' behaviour was not only tolerated, but he was even appointed dean of the deanery of Hirschberg and was thus able to commit even more shameful deeds than before. It was a simple matter for him to remove the German priest from his office as priest of the parish-church and assign him to St. Anna's Church, which was only small... In all this Father Titus' conscience never troubled him, for according to his opinion the Germans no longer had any rights, all contracts which had ever been made were invalid, and the Poles were the

²⁴¹ s. *Beitraege*, Vol II, p 377 ff, and Vol. III, p 322

supreme rulers. There was no one to prevent him from doing what he pleased, for as far as the Polish authorities were concerned the Germans no longer had any ecclesiastical or civil rights whatsoever and were utterly powerless, and, in any case, the Polish clergymen were supported by the Polish administrative authorities, who acted in keeping with the doctrines of the Polish Workers' Party (the P.P.R.), that is to say, they employed Communist methods. Since then, incidentally, things have changed somewhat. The Polish clergymen were thus caught in their own trap and most certainly undermined the prestige of the Catholic Church to a very considerable degree. The Germans, Catholics and Protestants alike, were disgusted at the behaviour of God's elect Catholics, for such the Poles considered themselves to be... There was only one question which the Poles still had to settle, — the German priest must be expelled. The latter had patiently borne all the hardships and indignities he had been subjected to. He looked after the German Catholics as best as he could. He continued to hold his services in St. Anna's Church and they were always well-attended, not only by Catholics, but also by the Protestants, who, since their large church in the town had been seized by the Poles and was now used as the Polish garrison church, no longer had a church of their own. The German priest had no income whatsoever. He managed to exist on the mass stipends, and some of the Poles actually helped him by giving him food. But his days in Hirschberg were numbered. On May 13th, 1947, he and the last of his faithful flock were expelled from Hirschberg... The Polish priests who came from Poland and settled in the "conquered Western provinces", as they called Silesia, could have done many good works had they wished; they were responsible for the moral and spiritual welfare of their fellow-countrymen and, in keeping with their profession, could also have assisted their German colleagues in spiritual and ecclesiastical matters. Unfortunately, however, most of them, with but a few exceptions, were tempted by money and power and sinned against the spirit of charity. The fact that they belonged to so many different orders was very regrettable and furthermore revealed the spirit which prevailed in the Polish monasteries. The Polish priests were of the opinion that the Nazis had completely extirpated the Catholic faith in Germany and that they must now revive it by applying Polish doctrines, but the reformation they attempted to bring about was merely a change for the worse and, in the truest sense, a deformation...

It was not safe for Germans to be out on the streets, for they ran the risk of being arrested by the Poles and taken off to work. There was plenty of work to be done, for the Poles were bone-idle and delighted in tormenting us. They actually robbed German women of the milk they had just bought with the few zloty they had managed to save, and poured it into the gutter. Even on the busiest streets they would deprive Germans of their suitcases or else steal the contents of the same, and make the Germans take off their shoes and hand them over. The latter were then obliged to proceed through the town in their stocking-feet. All this was done as a matter of course. German farmers who drove into town with

their horses and carts were either robbed of their horses or of the contents of their carts. Cases of looting occurred practically every day. For months on end the Poles terrorized the Germans in every possible way. They raped women and robbed them of the last of their possessions.

In May, 1946, the first lot of Germans were expelled from Hirschberg. The expulsions were then carried out according to streets, until it was finally the turn of the Germans living in the last row of houses. Prior to leaving the town we had to line up in the street and the Poles then robbed us of some of our belongings, which, in any case, were but a few. The Poles wanted to deprive me of my portfolio containing some sketches of my native town that I had drawn. I should have been deeply grieved to lose them. Thanks to the intervention of the German who was in charge of our group of expellees and who came to my aid, I was then allowed to keep them. With heavy hearts we set off for the camp in Hartau, where we spent the night and were, of course, once more robbed. Next morning, before we were put into the train, all our belongings and we ourselves were checked and searched. The purpose of this measures was, of course, to rob us of any valuables we might possibly still have in our possession. It was evening by the time we were put into the train, which did not, however, depart until next day. It was a glorious May morning, clear and sunny, when we left. The snow-clad peaks of the Riesengebirge towered above the green valley and seemed to be bidding us farewell. With sorrow in our hearts, we gazed at the beautiful landscape and secretly prayed that we should see our native mountains and valleys bathed in the morning sunshine again some day.

With the exception of a few persons, who were either employed by the Poles as skilled workers or else chose to become Polish subjects, all the German inhabitants of Hirschberg were expelled, and are now living in various districts of Germany. The Catholic community has thus been split up, and whether it will ever be united again, is a matter which time alone will show.

Report No. 172

The Parish of Schreiberhau in the Riesengebirge, near Hirschberg²⁴²

The parish of Schreiberhau included 2,500 Catholics (1942) and 5,632 persons of other denominations (1929). A chapel (Corpus Christi) is said to have been built there in 1488. In 1490 it became the chapel of ease for Hermsdorf and was consecrated as a church. It was replaced in 1652 by a stone building, the present Church of St Mary's in Nieder-Schreiberhau — The parish-church in Ober-Schreiberhau (Corpus Christi) was built in the Romanesque style during the years 1884 to 1886.

May 9th, 1945: The Russians occupied the village. The usual incidents occurred, but things were probably not quite as bad as elsewhere, owing to the fact there was no fighting in the village prior to the Russians seizing it.

²⁴² s. *Betraege*, Vol II, p 439 ff

May 12th Two women in the house next-door — an authoress and her eighteen-year old daughter — were raped by a Russian and a Mongolian. Each of the women was raped by both men in turn.

May 17th: The Russians rounded up all the men in the village and then made them march through the village a number of times, in a column. A man who was seriously ill with consumption brought up the rear of the column. — The men were later allowed to return to the village. The Russians are said to have rounded up all the men in other villages, too...

The people who had fled to Czechoslovakia prior to the arrival of the Russians now returned home again, — in rags, starving, and completely exhausted. Many of them were ill as a result of the brutal treatment they had been subjected to. Three workers took charge of the administration, "in order to settle the chaos", so they maintained. The Communist administration made us provide accommodation for a large number of refugees, but gave us no food-rations...

The huge supplies of food in Schreiberhau (it was intended as a refuge for the S.S.) were either removed or hidden and their hiding-place disclosed to the Russians by the Communists, or else the Russians and Poles found them of their own accord. In July a few rations were issued to the population, but in August they were reduced to practically nil, and in September none whatsoever were issued...

At the end of May, 1945, Polish troops arrived in Schreiberhau. The soldiers used to attend church and, save for one or two cases of looting which occurred, did not molest the Germans. In fact, they even protected German women from being molested by the Russians...

On or about June 10th, orders were issued that all the luggage which had been stored in Schreiberhau as a safety measure during the war had to be handed over to the administrative authorities within forty-eight hours' time. Failure to comply with these orders would incur the death-penalty. — Twenty suitcases and even more had been stored at some houses, as for instance at the vicarage, and these, together with all sorts of other luggage, were now handed over...

July, 1945. The Poles now began to enforce evacuation measures. We dreaded the so-called "Adolf Hitler Memorial Marches", which they were in the habit of organizing, 'in order to give us time to ponder on why we voted for Adolf Hitler', as they put it. The inhabitants of whole villages, above all the women and children, — the latter most certainly never voted for Hitler —, the aged and the sick, were turned out of their houses and forced to tramp the countryside for about three weeks. Poles on horseback escorted them. Those who were too exhausted to walk any further were left lying by the wayside. On one occasion, when one of these sad processions passed through Oberschreiberhau, sixteen persons collapsed near the station. Some of the inhabitants took them in and sheltered and looked after them. — These processions reminded us of the columns of concentration camp internees who had passed through the

village during the winter of 1945 — except that now the people who trudged along the roads were for the most part women and children...

The following persons were arrested on August 23rd: Mrs. von H., Dr. K., the lawyer, who had saved the lives of a large number of foreigners, especially Czechs, Miss P., Mrs. H., who was a social democrat, Mr. P., privy counsellor, and several other persons. K. was beaten to such an extent that his screams were heard by several persons who lived nearby. We were reminded of General Eisenhower's words in Dachau, when he asked the people who lived near to the concentration camp whether they had not heard the screams of the inmates, and why they had not gone to their rescue. We, too, heard K.'s screams, but we were powerless to help him. At the beginning of September, one of the prisoners, a Captain Philipps, threw himself out of a window and died next day from the injuries he sustained. He had been interned in a concentration camp once before, during the Nazi regime, and could not bear the thought of having to suffer the same torture a second time.

On August 25th, 1945, an order was issued that all Germans had to wear a white band on their sleeve. We complied with this order; in fact, we were proud to show that we were Germans. The mean part of it was that the Poles were now able to spot a German on the street when he was still about two hundred yards away and call to him to stop. If he failed to hear them, he was promptly shot. That was what very nearly happened to my sister as she was on her way to church one morning in May, 1946. Miss H., the station-master's daughter, saved her life. She ran up to the Pole who had called to my sister to stop, and told him that the latter was deaf, whereupon he refrained from shooting. In February, 1946, a man of Nieder-Schreiberhau, who was deaf and dumb, was shot by a Pole because he failed to stop when called to do so. He was wounded in the abdomen and died in hospital two days later.

On November 4th, the father of Mr. Sch., who was a Communist, was shot by marauders. His body lay in the house for days, as his relatives were not allowed to bury him before a Polish commission had investigated the case. Needless to say, the Polish commission never put in an appearance. Miss Rhiem was also shot in the thigh by a marauder on the same day and died two days later...

Some of the Poles were no doubt well-disposed towards the Germans, but they were powerless to put a stop to the dreadful terrorist measures which their fellow-countrymen resorted to. Mr. H., the carpenter, of Ober-Schreiberhau, related the following incident to me. "An elderly Polish woman was assigned to my house. She was humble in her manner and very friendly towards us. She was satisfied with one or two rooms in the house and did not bother us at all. As she had four children and one of her sons was still studying, she was badly in need of money. She went to the Polish mayor and asked him to help her in her financial need. He was highly indignant at her request and pointed out to her that he had already given her a twenty-roomed house and that she could not expect him to give her money as well. As a result, we were turned out

of the house, and the Polish woman is now selling all our furniture, one piece after another. What she will do when the furniture in all the rooms is sold, heaven only knows!" — And what the Poles will do when all the forests have been cut down and only the bare mountains are left and they have nothing to live on, heaven only knows, too!

Report No. 173

The Parish of Landeshut ²⁴³

The population of the town of Landeshut, capital of the district of Landeshut, numbered 5,290 Catholics (1942) and 13,299 persons of other denominations (1929). A church (St Peter's and St Paul's) is mentioned in historical records in 1295. The choir of the present church was built in the Middle Ages, and the nave, Gothic and Renaissance styles, at the end of the sixteenth century. — The Church of Corpus Christi is mentioned in historical records in 1560. It was rebuilt in 1610.

May 9th, 1945: At ten minutes past five a "memorable event", the occupation of our town by Soviet troops, took place. The town surrendered without any fighting. The "big men" of the town had fled prior to the arrival of the Russians, and in their confusion the inhabitants now turned to the Catholic and Protestant clergymen for help and advice. The women and girls of the town were subjected to dreadful atrocities. Most of us dreaded to think what the first night would be like, with Russian troops in the town. To make matters worse, crowds of foreign workers and concentration camp internees (from the camp which was part of Auschwitz), who for years had suffered great hardship, were now giving vent to their joy at being free once more, by looting and raiding all the houses in the town. As it was Ascension Day next day, the priest decided that this was a good opportunity to speak to the Russian commandant, who had just arrived in the town, beforehand. On the way to the commandant's headquarters the priest met him on the market square, where he was supervising some Russian soldiers as they cleared away piles of broken glass — the remains of all the windows that had been smashed by the above-mentioned foreign workers and concentration camp internees. With the help of an interpreter the priest asked the Russian commandant whether he might hold a service next day as it was Ascension Day. He was given permission to do so, but on his begging the commandant to see to it that the inhabitants of the town were not molested by marauders during the night, he was told that that was the commandant's business and not his. Needless to say, that night was dreadful.

Whit Monday, May 21st, 1945: Those who were on their way to attend early mass that morning were extremely surprised to find that placards in Polish and German had been posted all over the town, bearing the following words: "As from today the undersigned Polish

²⁴³ s. *Beitraege*, Vol II, p. 386 ff

mandatary will assume the administration of the territory of Silesia, which has been restored to Poland by the valiant sacrifice and heroism of the Polish Army!"...

July 2nd, 1945: At ten o'clock in the evening several Catholic and Protestant clergymen, a monk from Gruessau and some other gentlemen assembled at the Catholic vicarage in order to discuss a number of problems with the Soviet major of the Red Army. Our chief concern was whether the decisions reached at Yalta (the Potsdam Agreement was not signed until August 5th, 1945) would be enforced and whether we should be compelled to leave our native country. The Russian major thereupon replied that this was Generalissimo Stalin's wish, and that we should tell the Germans it would be better for them to leave now of their own free will, since they would otherwise be expelled by the Poles later on. At the time, however, we refused to believe him...

The usual atrocities committed elsewhere occurred in our town, too. Houses were looted, and Germans were turned out of their homes; they were beaten and mishandled, and were frequently arrested in the streets and taken off to work for the Poles, regardless of whether they were old or ill. The cells at the prison and the rest of the cellars which were used to imprison the poor Germans could have told a sad tale. Our oldest colleague, Father Alfons Haase²⁴⁴, of Oppau, was also imprisoned in the dreaded cellars and died there on September 1st, 1945, allegedly of heart-failure. The Polish authorities refused to listen to any intercession on his behalf. Fellow-prisoners told us some time later that Father Haase, who was seventy, had actually been beaten by the Poles... The women and girls of Landeshut, too, could have told many a sad tale of how they were raped by Polish civilians and militiamen...

During the afternoon and evening of November 20th, 1945, the Poles began rounding up all the Germans in the district of Landeshut and in the town itself, with the intention of evacuating them, regardless of whether they had volunteered to leave of their own accord or not. They were arrested on the street, on their way home from work, in their workshops and homes, and as they were leaving church after having attended vespers, and were taken along to the townhall for registration. At eleven o'clock at night they were marched off to the station and locked up in cattle-trucks. This barbarous procedure went on all night long. The inmates of the old people's home in Liebau, which was run by the nuns of the Order of St. Hedwig, and one of the elderly nuns were also forced to leave. For hours on end the Ziedertal railway conveyed evacuees to the main station in Landeshut. Finally, at about four o'clock in the morning, on November 21st, 1945, the train which was to convey the poor expellees westwards departed. According to reports which reached us some time afterwards, the expellees were taken to Mecklenburg, where, however, no preparations had been made to accommodate them. Many of the aged and sick died on the journey, and most of the ex-

²⁴⁴ Born on June 6, 1878, and ordained on June 23, 1902

pellees were robbed of the few belongings they had hurriedly gathered together before leaving their homes. A few of the expellees returned home, broken in health and spirit, after a hazardous and roundabout journey across the Oder-Neisse frontier. They gave us an account of what had happened during the journey from Landeshut to Mecklenburg. Mr. Eissler, the baker, was one of the victims of these allegedly humane evacuation measures enforced by the Poles. He returned home to die and lies buried in Landeshut, his native town. — The result of these ruthless measures on the part of the "Catholic" Poles was that many of the German Catholics began to have doubts as regards their own faith, and the Protestants began to have a very poor opinion of all who were Catholics...

On Sunday, January 6th, 1946, Mrs. Lauer, a devout Catholic, was shot by Polish rowdies as she was on her way to early mass. According to the testimony of several eyewitnesses, there was no reason at all for this action on the part of the Poles.

March, 1946: During Lent, notices were affixed all over the town admonishing the Polish Catholics to remember their religious duties. They actually flocked to church to celebrate this Festival, but by doing so they defiled the meaning and significance of the holy, penitential sacrament. The Catholics and the Protestants, too, waited in vain for the Polish Catholics to manifest some sign of atonement. On the contrary, however, — after they had fulfilled their religious duty by going to church, the Poles continued to commit as many atrocities as before...

April 11th to 14th, 1946: The atrocities committed by the Poles during these four days were the worst that had ever occurred. Men, women, and girls were rounded up and forced to open the graves of the victims of the concentration camp, who had been buried in the former Jewish cemetery. Only a few of them were given a spade with which to perform this task. The rest of them had to dig the soil, which was still frozen, with their hands. Those who attempted to use a stone in order to facilitate their laborious task were beaten unmercifully. Regardless of all sanitary regulations and precautionary measures as far as hygiene was concerned, the Poles then made the Germans remove the bodies, which, incidentally, had been in the ground for about one and a half years, with their bare hands, place them on biers, and take them to a mass grave. The women and girls had to wipe the faces of the dead with their handkerchiefs.

Good Friday, April 19th, 1946: At the instructions of the Polish priest a new Holy Sepulchre was set up in St. John's Chapel as he apparently considered the Holy Sepulchre in St. Anne's Chapel, at which we German Catholics had been wont to worship, too plain and unpretentious. The Poles flocked to their Holy Sepulchre and so, too, did the Germans, of course. But many of us were horrified to find ourselves kneeling before the Holy Sepulchre next to our persecutors — a week after they had committed such dreadful atrocities in the Jewish cemetery — and to recognize the militiamen who formed the guard of honour in front

of the Holy Sepulchre as those who had robbed us of our luggage at the station or looted our houses...

May 20th, 1946. This was the day on which the Poles began expelling the inhabitants of the town. Every day, from May 8th onwards, we saw treks of poor expellees passing through the town. And now it was our turn! The inhabitants of Landeshut were expelled in five groups. Thousands of persons, including the two Catholic priests, were obliged to leave their homes...

The departure of the last lot of expellees, who included many Catholics and the two Catholic priests, on May 24th, 1946, at about eleven o'clock at night, meant the end of the Catholic parish of Landeshut, at least for the time being. For more than 650 years German men and women had looked upon the Catholic community and the beautiful old Church of St. Peter's and St. Paul's as their spiritual home and refuge...

Many of the inhabitants, especially those employed in the textile industry, were forced to remain in Landeshut as they had to work for the Russian and Polish Occupation forces. The majority of parishioners are scattered throughout Western Germany...

Report No. 174

The Parish of Gruessau, near Landeshut ²⁴⁵

The parish of Gruessau included 1,400 Catholics (1942) and 257 persons of other denominations (1929). A church (The Assumption of the Virgin Mary) and a Cistercian abbey were founded in 1292 by Duke Bolko. The present church was built during the years 1727 to 1734 and is one of the most beautiful baroque churches in Silesia. The sculptures on the west facade are the work of Ferdinand Prokoff. The paintings in the interior are by G. Wilhelm Neunherz. The organ was built by Engler in 1735. Gruessau was secularized in 1810, and the church then became the parish-church in 1812. — The Church of St. Joseph's was built by Abbot Bernhard Rosa during the years 1692 to 1696, to replace St. Andrew's Chapel. The interior was painted by Willmann.

Gruessau, near Landeshut in Lower Silesia, with its Benedictine abbey and its two beautiful churches, is regarded by all Silesians and most of the Catholics in Eastern Germany, as well as by all art-lovers and by those who are fond of Gregorian chants, as a centre of German cultural and spiritual life.

At the end of May, 1945, the first lot of Poles arrived in Gruessau. They consisted for the most part of soldiers, who took up their quarters at various farms which had been seized for this purpose. The attitude of the German population towards them was by no means hostile. On the contrary, most of the inhabitants were relieved that the Poles had to some extent replaced the Russians, and now hoped that the few small Russian units that had remained behind would refrain from their usual

²⁴⁵ s. *Beitraege*, Vol II, p. 359 ff

nightly raids. In addition, most of the Catholics in Gruessau believed that the Polish Catholics wished them no ill.

In June the Poles took over the administration of the village as well as the railway and postal services. They now attempted to give the village a Polish appearance. They removed all the German names on streets, stations, and signposts, and replaced them by Polish ones. More and more Polish civilians began to settle in the village, and one farm after another was seized. The German owners and their families were either turned out or a small room in the house was assigned to them, in which they all lived crowded together. They were forced to work for the Poles, but were not entitled to any of their former property. In fact, they were not even entitled to a meal. The Poles were only out to make money, and the German farmers were obliged to starve on their own farms. The rest of the inhabitants, and in particular the many refugees from Silesian districts further east, who were now living in the village, were even worse off. The Poles only issued ration cards to a few persons in the village, namely to those who worked for them, either in the factory, in the forest, or as artisans.

At the end of June, 1945, orders were issued that all the Germans in the village were to be evacuated. Polish militiamen went from house to house and, belabouring all the Germans with their rubber cudgels who were not in possession of a certificate to show that they were employed by Poles, drove them out into the street. Orders were issued that everyone had to be out of the house in five to ten minutes' time. The villagers were taken along to the market square and then set off on the so-called "Adolf Hitler March". This procedure was carried out twice in Gruessau, and on both occasions the poor victims, who included the aged, the sick, and mothers with tiny children, were forced to march as far as Hirschberg, a distance of about twenty-five miles. Polish militiamen on horseback urged them on, beating them and shouting at them all the time. Whenever the road went uphill, as for instance near Schmiedeberg Pass, the Poles made the Germans walk at a great speed. Many of them were obliged to throw away the belongings they were carrying, as they were so exhausted. A few persons managed to escape and returned to Gruessau. When the villagers reached Hirschberg the Poles left them to their own fate. Most of them turned back and arrived in Gruessau three or four days afterwards. Some of them, however, trekked as far as Saxony, because they were of the opinion that conditions were better in the Russian Occupied Zone. But as they were refused accommodation there, they were eventually obliged to return to Gruessau, and in some cases it took them a couple of months to get back home again. Like a number of other persons in the village, I managed to avoid being forced to take part in this march by jumping out of a window and hiding for about a week. No one bothered about those who returned to Gruessau. They received no ration cards, in any case, and their food supplies had all been stolen during their absence. In addition, their linen, clothes, and other belongings which they had been forced to leave behind had

either been impounded by the Polish militia or seized by Polish civilians, who had meanwhile occupied the house. To make matters worse, the prices of food went up from month to month to such an extent that hardly anyone could afford to pay them. In order to be able to exist, people were obliged to sell the belongings they had managed to save, such as clothes or linen, to the Poles or else barter them for food. Needless to say, the prices paid by the Poles varied considerably and were never equivalent to the value of the objects in question, but it was no good haggling with them. More and more houses were seized, as many of the Poles moved from one dwelling to another, in order to loot as many as they could. The Germans were forced to leave their houses at such short notice that, as a rule, they did not even have time to take the most essential of their belongings with them. And, in any case, the Polish evacuation commission usually impounded the last of their belongings...

Germans were constantly being arrested by the Polish militia for no reason whatsoever, and were then marched off to the militia prison, where they were tortured in a most inhuman manner...

Report No. 175

The Parish of Michelsdorf, near Landeshut ²⁴⁶

The parish of Michelsdorf included 425 Catholics (1942) and 1,639 persons of other denominations (1929). A church (All Saints') is mentioned in historical records in 1363. The present church was built in the baroque style during the years 1727 to 1729.

... On May 9th, 1945, Russian tanks entered the village, followed by artillery. No fighting occurred. A cannon and two lorries drove up to the vicarage. The men did not, however, loot the house. They merely enquired whether two majors could have a room at the vicarage for a midday-rest, but the majors never appeared. In the evening the Russians departed, but by next morning Russian infantry had arrived in the village. In fact, at four o'clock in the morning three Russians raided the vicarage and searched all the rooms. They found the bales of material which some German soldiers had stored in the attic and took most of them away. Several other parties of soldiers came to the house for the same purpose, but they did not molest us personally. A number of them came to ask us for spirits. — As the church-door had not been locked on the previous day, the Russians had entered and had stolen all the candles they had found and had also tried to open the tabernacle. Next day, the church-door was locked and they tried to open it with a crow-bar, but their efforts proved in vain. — When the Poles occupied the district on May 22nd, the Russians only retained K.'s estate. Petzelsdorf, which belonged to the parish of Michelsdorf, was frequently raided by

²⁴⁶ s. *Beitraege*, Vol I, p. 202 ff

Russian marauders. Two Russians came to the vicarage on one occasion in order to look for wireless sets and searched all the drawers and cupboards...

The Polish militia regime commenced in June, 1945. On July 9th, the Poles expelled the refugees from the village and seized all the luggage which the latter and some of the refugees who had passed through the village in 1944 had stored at our houses. On July 10th, we were horrified to learn that the inhabitants of the town of Liebau were to be expelled by the Poles. I went to meet the Liebau trek and, as the Polish guards who were supposed to be escorting the expellees were nowhere in sight, I told the people from Liebau that the inhabitants in Michelsdorf would give them accommodation. Next morning, however, I was obliged to look on as a trek consisting of people from Liebau, Gruessau, Buchwald, and Michelsdorf left the village. One of the Polish guards appeared to be even more brutal than the rest and kept beating the expellees, especially women and the aged and infirm. I tried to stop him and asked the Polish militiamen stationed in our village and also their leader to intervene, but they appeared to be embarrassed by my request and did nothing in the matter. The Polish guards who were escorting the trek were apparently Bolsheviks and came from some other district. They made the expellees walk as far as Hirschberg, where many of them, however, managed to escape and get away by train. Most of them then returned home again a few days afterwards. On July 17th, Polish civilians — a rather beggarly crowd, who came from Neu-Sandez — began to swarm into the village and settle on the farms. Some of these new owners were fairly decent, but most of them were utterly ruthless in their behaviour towards the Germans. They seized all the rooms and furniture in the houses they occupied, and mishandled the German owners. They even went so far as to ill-treat the chairman of the trustees of the church. They reported the Germans to the militia, with the result that the Germans were then arrested, locked up in the cellars at militia headquarters, and mishandled in a most abominable and brutal way. On July 24th, 1945, one of the villagers, who was imprisoned at militia headquarters and had allegedly "confessed" on the previous day, committed suicide as he was terrified of the tortures to which the Poles would subject him. Mrs. K., the owner of the bakery, was beaten on the soles of her feet by militiamen because she hid some of her belongings, so that the Pole who had seized her house would not get hold of them. Several girls of the village were arrested and raped. Most of the men were arrested by the militia at some time or other and were either mishandled or blackmailed...

At first, the Polish militiamen stationed in our village used to flock to church every Sunday and attend our services, which was a source of great annoyance to us. No doubt they did so in order to show off in front of the Polish civilians. When the Polish priest in Liebau started coming to the village to hold special services for the Poles the militiamen stopped going to mass...

On November 9th, 1945, the Protestant vicarage had to be evacuated after militia had previously ransacked and looted all the rooms. The Protestant home for the aged was evacuated on November 19th, and the inmates, some of whom were Catholics, were expelled from the country and sent across the Lusatian Neisse. The wife of the Protestant vicar thus lost her home, but she was given accommodation at the Catholic vicarage. For about six months the offices of the Protestant pastorate were housed in the Catholic vicarage, and the Protestant vicar from the next village always used to spend the night there whenever he came to Michelsdorf to hold a service. On one occasion, when the vicar's wife was on her way to Haselbach in order to attend to some urgent business matter, she was dragged into militia headquarters and raped...

On May 19th, 1946, I was expelled from the vicarage, and the house was sealed up. After standing about for three hours, we received orders to leave the village and set off for Landeshut on foot, a distance of about six and a half miles. The Poles allowed us to leave without molesting us. The militia were nowhere in sight. One hundred and twenty-five Germans were forced to remain behind in the village as they were employed by the Poles for special jobs...

Report No. 176

The Parish of Neuen, near Landeshut ²⁴⁷

The parish of Neuen included 967 Catholics (1942) and 125 persons of other denominations (1929). A church (St Lawrence's) is mentioned in historical records in 1362. The present church was built in the Gothic style about the middle of the fourteenth century. The side-aisle and the vaulting of the nave were built in 1588. The interior is in the baroque style. Until 1810 Neuen belonged to the Cistercian Abbey in Gruessau.

... The first lot of Russian tanks rolled through the villages in our district on the morning of May 9th, 1945. We had previously hoisted white flags on all the buildings, including the church. As there were no German troops in any of the villages, the Russians did not encounter any resistance. The Volkssturm did not go into action at all.

The Russian Occupation troops in no way interfered in religious matters. We were allowed to hold our services as in former times. The usual evening devotions in May, however, could not be observed as it was not safe for Germans to be out in the streets in the evenings. But we celebrated the Feast of Corpus Christi both on the actual day and on the following Sunday and held special services as well as our usual procession. Russian soldiers frequently attended our services, but on no occasion did they ever cause any disturbance. As a precautionary measure the church-door was always kept locked, except, of course, when services were being held.

²⁴⁷ s. *Beitraege*, Vol I, p. 205 ff

In June, 1945, the first lot of Polish civilians arrived in the villages in our district and the civil administration was now taken over by the Poles. A Polish mayor took charge of the administration in Goertelsdorf

The Polish civilians now began to settle down on the farms in the district. The majority of them were young men and women, most of whom were unmarried. The influx of the Poles continued for several months. Most of them came from the districts of Neu-Sandez and Alt-Sandez in Galicia. The Germans were now forced to endure much hardship and suffering. As all German property and estate was expropriated and transferred to the Polish State, which then placed it at the disposal of the Polish settlers, the Germans were deprived of all their rights and privileges and no longer enjoyed any protection whatsoever.

At the beginning of July, the Poles began to resort to large-scale evacuation measures. Polish militiamen turned all the German inhabitants out of their homes, with the exception of a few persons who were given special permits entitling them to remain in the village. With much difficulty the priest managed to get permission for the verger and the gravedigger to remain. Escorted by Polish militia guards, the evacuees set out on foot. After being forced to trudge along the roads for several days, most of them returned home again. During their absence their homes were raided and looted by Russians and Poles.

At about the same time, Polish militia commandos took up their quarters in the villages in our district, and the Germans were now forced to endure even more hardships than before. Practically all the Germans in the entire district were arrested, imprisoned, beaten, or robbed by the militiamen at some time or other.

As regards the religious attitude of the Poles, I should like to stress that very few of them attended church and practically none of them ever took Holy Communion, despite the fact that Polish services were held in Gruessau, which was quite near to Neuen... Conditions, as far as the Germans were concerned, went from bad to worse. The Poles had meanwhile settled on all the farms and in all the houses as the rightful owners. The Germans were robbed of all their belongings, and the Poles searched all the rooms from top to bottom, in the hopes of finding valuables which the Germans had concealed in some secret hiding-place. German men and women were frequently mishandled by the Poles in a most brutal way...

At about seven o'clock one evening, in November, 1945, about one hundred to one hundred and fifty persons, all of them inhabitants of the three villages ²⁴⁸ belonging to the parish, were turned out of their homes by Polish militiamen. They were marched off to Landesbut that same evening and were then put into cattle-trucks and taken into the Russian Zone. It was not until recently that we received some news of them.

²⁴⁸ Goertelsdorf, Klein-Hennersdorf, and Neuen

About 1,500 Germans left Landeshut on the day in question. They included persons from various villages in the district and from Landeshut itself, and had been rounded up by the Polish militia and forced to leave their homes within fifteen minutes. They were only allowed to take a few of their belongings with them.

The Poles played another dirty trick on some of the farmers in Klein-Hennersdorf. One day, about the middle of February, 1946, some of the Polish militia stationed at Gruessau, who were notorious for the abominable and brutal way they treated Germans, appeared in the village and turned about fifty German farmers off their farms. They then took them to Oberzieder and made them live in empty houses there. The poor Germans had nothing to eat and were obliged to beg for food. At that time the Poles were particularly ruthless in their behaviour towards the Germans. A young woman of twenty-four who lived in Klein-Hennersdorf was also turned out of her home, despite the fact that she was seriously ill. She died whilst in Oberzieder. Several of those who were turned out of their homes contracted typhus. Incidentally, the Gruessau militia also turned out a number of persons living in Oberzieder and took them to Klein-Hennersdorf, where they were then forced to live crowded together in a room at the inn...

At about six o'clock in the evening, on May 7th, 1946, placards were affixed here and there in the two villages of Neuen and Goertelsdorf, informing the Germans as to the chief expulsion regulations. These placards, which had been printed a long time beforehand, were dated February, 1946, and did not state on what day the Germans were to be expelled. When I asked the Polish mayor on which day we should have to leave, he told me he did not know. The Poles would not allow the Germans to be out on the street after six o'clock in the evening. They themselves, incidentally, wandered about the village all night long. The Germans actually had to put out all the lights in their houses at nine o'clock in the evening. At five o'clock in the morning, on May 8th, 1946, the Poles began turning the Germans out of their homes. The latter were forced to get up and get dressed and be ready to leave as quickly as they could. Polish guards, armed with rifles, never let the Germans out of their sight for a moment and actually forced the women to get dressed in their presence. Within half an hour's time everybody had to be lined up in the street, despite the fact that the Poles had no intention of giving the order for us to depart. In fact, it was almost noon by the time we set off for Landeshut. The luggage was conveyed on carts and some of the people were also allowed to ride on the carts, but most of us proceeded on foot. When we reached Landeshut the Poles took us to a collecting camp, where we were actually given a warm drink. We were the first lot of expellees from our district.

At about eight o'clock next morning, the Poles began checking our luggage, a procedure which they conducted in a most arbitrary manner. Several expellees were robbed of their bank-books, whilst others were deprived of the food supplies they had taken along with them, which

in any case were very meagre, as the Germans had received no food-rations for months. In the course of the day we were taken along to the station and put into cattle-trucks, and, finally, at about ten o'clock that night, the train set off.

Despite the fact that the expellees were now forced to bid farewell to their homes, their property, and their native village, few tears were shed, for our expulsion was our deliverance from a life which had gradually become unbearable. Had we not been expelled, we should never have survived the dreadful conditions which prevailed. About eight Germans remained behind in Neuen and about fifteen in Goertelsdorf. I learnt much later that the inhabitants of the third village belonging to the parish, namely Klein-Hennersdorf, had been expelled on May 12th, 1946...

In conclusion, I should like to stress that I have only given a very brief account of conditions in Neuen during the Polish regime. It is impossible to describe all the hardships and sufferings which the Germans were forced to endure. And we certainly became acquainted with the scum of humanity. The dreadful part of it all was that these creatures allegedly professed the same religious faith as we ourselves and even attended our churches and knelt in prayer there. Many of the Catholics in the village were so indignant that they used to refer to the special services which were held for the Poles as the "rogues' mass".

Report No. 177

The Parish of Schoemberg, near Landeshut²⁴⁹

The parish of Schoemberg included 2,600 Catholics (1942) and 322 persons of other denominations (1929). A church (St Joseph's) is mentioned in historical records in 1343. The present church was built in the baroque style during the years 1670 to 1691. Until 1810 Schoemberg belonged to the Cistercian Abbey in Gruessau.

The entry of the Russian troops in our little town, in 1945, went off fairly quietly. Practically all the inhabitants had decided to remain in Schoemberg prior to the arrival of the Russians. On the first night of the Occupation, however, the Russians began terrorizing and molesting the inhabitants of the town. They raided and looted houses and raped the womenfolk. Fortunately, however, no one was killed. But the people were all scared to death as the Russians continued to commit all kinds of atrocities.

Three weeks later the first detachment of Polish soldiers, numbering about eighty men, took up their quarters in the town, and the inhabitants were greatly relieved, for the Poles appeared to be decent-living Christians and Catholics and attended church regularly. Nor did they

²⁴⁹ s. *Beitraege*, Vol I, p 210 ff

attempt to loot any of the houses. After a time, however, they began to show their true colours. Without any warning they turned out the occupants (36 families) of the so-called Reichs housing estate and only allowed them to take a few of their belongings with them. In addition, they now began looting houses and robbing and assaulting the inhabitants of the town. Practically every night atrocities were committed by Polish soldiers. In this respect the so-called Polish frontier police, who were stationed in Voigtsdorf, outdid the rest of the Poles. Conditions went from bad to worse when Polish militia and Polish civilians began to arrive in the town. The latter, most of whom were attired in filthy rags, were completely demoralized. They promptly moved into houses belonging to Germans, and if the latter raised any objections they immediately fetched the militia, who thereupon beat the German owners, arrested them and locked them up in the cellars at militia headquarters, and maltreated them in a most brutal manner. The cellars, incidentally, were always crowded with German men and women. Practically every day Polish militia and civilians searched houses belonging to Germans, on some pretext or other, and forced the latter to hand over whatever took their fancy. The worst atrocity ever committed by the Poles in Schoenberg occurred on July 10th, 1945. All the Germans who were unemployed and were not in a position to produce a certificate issued by the Poles, to the effect that they were employed by the latter, were turned out of their homes by Polish soldiers without any warning. They were only allowed to take a few of their belongings with them and had to line up on the market square. The tragic scenes which were enacted are indescribable. Mrs. Maria Krause, of Schoenberg, died as a result of being forcibly evicted from her home, and Miss Gertrud Beer, of Voigtsdorf, who was only twenty, was shot by Polish soldiers, as she and her sister were trying to escape across an open field. It was a sad procession that set out at nightfall, driven along like cattle by Polish soldiers, in the direction of Liebau. Since only those Germans were expelled who could not prove that they were employed somewhere, the procession consisted for the most part of mothers (war-widows) with children and old persons who were no longer able to work. The poor creatures were forced to trek as far as Langenoels, near Lauban, and were then allowed to return home.

The following cases illustrate the depravity of the Poles:

- 1) On his ninetieth birthday old Mr. Erasmus G., the tailor, of Voigtsdorf, was robbed of his birthday presents by Poles.
- 2) One night some Poles stole an ox belonging to Mr. Alois M., a farmer in Tannengrund. Next morning Mr. M. was arrested by the Polish militia and accused of having handed over the ox to partisans in the forest. He was imprisoned for several days and beaten and mishandled.
- 3) Mr. Wilhelm Kleinwaechter, of Schoenberg, was forced to hand over his last pig to some Polish soldiers. For doing so, he and his son,

Bernhard, were arrested by the militia. He was beaten and mishandled to such an extent that he died of the internal injuries he sustained...

The lot of the aged was most tragic. In order to alleviate their distress a little, one hundred and twenty aged men and women were given a warm meal three times a week by the charity society. From May 15th, 1945, until December 31st, 1945, the charity society of our parish collected about 33,000 Reichsmarks, which were then distributed among the poor and the needy.

In addition to the state of constant fear and terror in which they lived, the Catholics were also tormented by many religious doubts. The Poles claimed to be devout Catholics, but it was a common occurrence to see some Pole or other who regularly committed crimes and atrocities during the week kneeling in prayer in church on Sundays. It was with considerable indignation that the German Catholics saw Polish brides go to the altar attired in clothes that they had stolen from the Germans...

November 20th, 1945, was a sad day for the inhabitants of Schoemberg. That evening two hundred inhabitants were turned out of their homes, without any warning, by drunken Polish soldiers, and were marched off to the station, despite the fact that some of them had not even been given a chance to get fully dressed. The poor creatures were then sent to Mecklenburg, where many of them died of hunger-typhus. The fate which befell the seven young Stenzel children was terribly tragic. Their father was killed on April 1st, 1945, during the fighting in Glogau, and they then lost their mother and an aunt in Mecklenburg...

On May 8th, 1946, Father Sch., the German priest, was expelled by the Poles, and the Polish priest now took over the vicarage and the church, including all the furniture and fixtures. Together with about seven hundred of his parishioners, the priest was sent to the district of Lemgo, in the province of Lippe. On May 10th, 1946, a further six hundred parishioners were evacuated to the district of Nienburg on the Weser; on May 11th, about seventy were sent to Oldenburg, and on August 30th, 1946, a further eight hundred were expelled from Schoemberg, and some of them were sent to Hanover, and the rest to the Muenster district. On September 21st, twenty-five sick and aged persons were taken to Koenigsflutter. There were still about four hundred parishioners left in Schoemberg. Some of them were then expelled on January 6th, 1947, despite the fact that the weather was bitterly cold and the temperature was about ten degrees below zero.²⁵⁰

SECTION VI

The Martyrdom of Silesian Priests²⁵¹

- 1) Bujara, Karl
- 2) Herrmann, Bernhard
- 3) Janotta, Norbert
- 4) Kutz, Emil
- 5) Laake, Otto
- 6) Meisel, Georg
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Dropalla, Wilhelm
Klodwig, Bernhard

Report No 178

Curate Karl Bujara, of Oderhain, Upper Silesia
(born January 1, 1904, ordained January 27, 1929, shot in January, 1945)

"Curate Karl Bujara, so his father told me in the spring of 1945, was arrested by the Gestapo on Christmas Eve, 1944. He was then taken to the prison in Oppeln, where his father visited him in January, 1945. He was liberated by the Russians when they seized the town, and set off on foot for Oderhain. A tragic fate befell him, however, when he reached the boundary of his parish. He was stopped by Russians, who assumed that he was either an officer in disguise or a spy and shot him. His body lay buried in the snow until the beginning of March and was found when the thaw set in."

Report No. 179

Bernhard Herrmann, retired priest, of Neustadt, Upper Silesia
(born October 1, 1872, ordained June 21, 1899, shot March 18, 1945)

In 1945, Father Bernhard Herrmann, who had formerly held the office of priest in Moenchmotschelnitz, near Steinau on the Oder, was

²⁵¹ The following reports are a supplement to the book, *The Martyrdom of Silesian Priests 1945/46*, by Dr Johannes Kaps, who has compiled this work. Published by the Kirchliche Hilfsstelle, Munich. A further publication, which has as its subject the heroism of the women and girls of Eastern Germany, is at present being compiled and will appear in due course.

living at the monastery of the Brothers of Charity of St. John, where for more than fifteen years he had played an active part in religious matters and had regularly heard confession in the church attached to the monastery.

The Russians captured Neustadt in Upper Silesia on March 17th, 1945. The German military hospital, which for a time had been housed in the monastery, had been transferred elsewhere in January, 1945. After the town had been seized by the Russians the monks and Father Herrmann remained in the cellar all night for safety. At about seven o'clock next morning the monks went to their cells and Father Herrmann went up to his room. Soon afterwards Russian soldiers raided the house and started searching all the rooms. One of them, who was drunk, knocked on Father Herrmann's door and, as the latter did not open it immediately, the Russian began banging against the door with the butt-end of his rifle. On hearing the noise, Father Herrmann opened it. The Russian promptly levelled his rifle at him and shot him in the head. Father Herrmann died instantaneously. He was buried in the monastery garden, beneath a fir-tree at the edge of the lawn.

Report No. 180

Father Norbert Janotta, priest, of Bruenne, Upper Silesia
(born June 6, 1904, ordained February 2, 1930, shot January 25, 1945)

"Some of the villagers gave Father Janotta's father the following account of what happened: When the Russians advanced into Upper Silesia they seized the village of Bruenne. Some of them searched the vicarage and asked Father Janotta for alcohol. He gave them what he had, and they then went to the farm next-door. A Russian labourer, who had been employed on the farm for a couple of years, told them to go back to the vicarage as the priest had plenty of alcohol in stock. The Russians thereupon returned to the vicarage. When Father Janotta saw them approaching he ran out into the garden. The Russians ran after him and then stabbed and shot him. It is not known whether he died instantaneously. When he was found, he was already dead. He was buried in a mass grave together with several other dead, but his body was later exhumed and interred in a separate grave. — His dog, who had always been his faithful companion, died on his grave."

Report No. 181

Emil Kutz, priest and Act. Circ., of Marklinden, Upper Silesia
(born December 21, 1893, ordained June 20, 1920, shot January 31, 1945)

Father Kutz dreaded the arrival of the Russians. We often discussed the military situation, and when I suggested to him that he should flee before the Russians seized Marklinden, he replied, "Yes, I shall, when my parishioners set off for the West, but I can't desert my flock beforehand."

... Russians were billeted in the house every day and most of the cattle had disappeared from the stables. We dreaded the nights most of all. We younger ones often used to get together and discuss politics, in fact, one of these discussions, on January 31st, 1945, had disastrous consequences. We were just discussing the political situation when three Russians suddenly entered the room and joined in the conversation. All of a sudden, they hit two of us in the face... It was not until next morning, however, that we learnt of the terrible tragedy that had happened. Mr. J. came to tell us that Father Kutz was dead. He had been murdered (shot in the head) by the three Russians, who had first of all shot one of their comrades at Dada's, had then attacked us, and had later gone along to the vicarage and killed him. We were horrified when we heard the dreadful news. That afternoon we dug his grave, and next day we buried him. We had to use a carpet as a shroud. About ten people attended his funeral. He lies buried on the east side of the church."

Report No. 182

Dr. Theol. Otto Laake, priest of Neuwalde, Upper Silesia
(born September 5, 1869, ordained June 11, 1894, shot March 24, 1945)

"On March 24th, 1945, the Russians captured Neuwalde and set fire to the convent. Many of those who had remained behind perished in the flames. In his fright Dr. Laake tried to flee to Altwalde in order to seek shelter with Father Sch., who had, however, already fled. Just as Dr. Laake reached the level crossing, some Russians called out to him to put his hands up. As he was very deaf he failed to hear them. They thereupon shot him in the back. When the first lot of inhabitants returned to the village they found Dr. Laake lying dead near to the level crossing. They placed his body on a bundle of straw and took it to a barn. He was later buried in the cemetery, together with several other villagers who had been killed.

He rests among his flock, but there is no one left to place flowers on his grave. But those of his flock who are still alive, though they are now scattered throughout many districts and far away from home, still think of him with gratitude in their hearts. May the Lord grant his soul eternal peace!"

Report No. 183

Father Georg Meisel, priest of Tinz, near Breslau
(born December 18, 1891, ordained June 13, 1915, died August 27, 1945)

"I should like to thank you very much for *The Martyrdom of Silesian Priests*; I was deeply moved when I read it, for I myself experienced the terrible conditions which are described in the book and was personally acquainted with several of the priests who were murdered. My brother was heartbroken when he learnt of the death of some of his colleagues. Some news, of course, got through to the districts where the fighting was still in progress, and some time after Germany's collapse my brother

received a copy of the Church Gazette (typewritten) from Breslau. He was so deeply moved by the news it contained that he enclosed it in a letter he wrote to a colleague (in pencil), a copy of which I am herewith sending you. In any case, my dear brother's name deserves to be mentioned in this document on the judgment of humanity, for he was subjected to such dreadful suffering and hardship by the Russians that his health was seriously impaired and he finally died of hunger-typhus. My late brother also held the office of district administrator of the records of the Archpresbyterate of Ohlau in Silesia, to which his parish, Tinz, near Breslau, belonged.

The following letter was returned to me at my request. The enclosed is a copy of the original letter, which I cherish as a treasured memento of my dear brother. He was so humble and self-effacing that he did not even mention the greatest hardships he was forced to endure, namely that he was beaten by a Russian because he was too weak to wield a spade properly when he was forced to dig a grave for some dead soldiers, on the road, not far from Kanth, and that the Russian threatened to push him into the grave if he did not work. Day and night, for months on end, we were forced to endure starvation and threats. The thought that he was powerless to protect his parishioners and alleviate their distress and could only try to help them by prayer, tortured my brother, both mentally and physically. He had never been very robust in health. On countless occasions he trembled for my life when I was in danger, when I prayed, "Christ, have mercy on me", and waited for the Russians to shoot me, for I would rather have died than fall into their hands. But as if by a miracle, I was spared each time.

On the Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary my brother, summoning up his last ounce of strength, celebrated Holy Mass for the last time. He collapsed the same day. I nursed him day and night, but the fever grew worse and he rapidly became weaker and weaker. His last words were, "It is God's Will. I am ready to go." Neither medical help nor medical supplies were available for us Germans. When it was already too late the Polish commissar placed a covered wagon at the disposal of some of the persons who were suffering from typhus. We placed my brother on an old mattress, and, together with the other persons who were sick, he was taken to Breslau and admitted to St. Elisabeth's Hospital, part of which was still standing, — about two-thirds of the building was demolished during the siege. My dear brother died there a few days later, on August 27th, 1945, fortified by the last rites of the Roman Catholic Church.

I should like to mention that right up to the time of his collapse he visited all those who were suffering from typhus, gave them courage and hope, and administered the holy sacrament to them. He officiated at the funerals of Catholics and Protestants alike, in fact, very often at several funerals on one and the same day. He was truly a martyr for the cause of charity to mankind.

I received permission to convey his body from the hospital to his own parish on a cart and Polish militia escorted me. On August 30th, 1945, we laid him to rest near to his beloved church. Many of his parishioners, the majority of whom had returned home after the capitulation only to be expelled from their native village again later, attended his funeral. Four priests were also present. Two of them, like my brother, had also remained in their parishes in the fighting zone during the war. A short time before his death, namely on June 13th, 1945, my brother celebrated his thirtieth jubilee as a priest.

The following letter which he entrusted to a German, who set out on foot to visit his relatives in Friedland, near Waldenburg, Silesia, was addressed to the priest there and is my brother's last account of all the sufferings we endured."

"Father Georg Meisel

Tinz, August 4th, 1945

My Dear Colleague,

We became acquainted with each other in Puschel, near Breslau. Please excuse the note-paper and pencil, but it is all I have.

I am writing to ask you a great favour. I remained in my parish, and on February 10th, 1945, the Russians reached the village. Next day, all the Catholics who were left in the village (40) sought shelter at the vicarage. During the night of February 12th to 13th, Tinz was badly shelled. The Russians closed up the line of encirclement round Breslau, between here and Domschau. The church, the school, and the two houses next-door were hit by shells. In fact, shells fell all round the vicarage. On Tuesday, February 13th, the house was constantly raided and looted by Russian soldiers. Four of the forty Catholics who were sheltering at the vicarage were men. That evening the Russians shot the brother-in-law of Mr. Th., the bearer of this letter, because he tried to protect one of the girls whom the Russians wanted to drag out of the house. Then they shot one of the other men, and after that they dragged me out of the house, and pointed their revolvers at my head, with the intention of shooting me. At that moment, however, all the women rushed out of the house, led by Mrs. A., the widow of the man who had been shot and sister of Mr. Th., and, surrounding me in order to protect me, called out, "We'll die with our priest!" The Russians thereupon let me alone and sent us back into the house, where they locked us up in two of the rooms. They dragged one of the girls outside, and that was the last we ever saw of her. An article of clothing which she had been wearing at the time was found later, and we assume that she was killed by the Russians. The Russians then chased us out of the rooms, through the entrance-hall, where the bodies of the two men who had been shot were lying, and into the cellar. In the middle of the night, they turned us out of the cellar and drove us out into the open, despite the fact that it was pouring with rain. Next morning they refused to let us enter the house, and so we set off for Woigwitz, via Malsen. We were caught in the shelling on the way and had to

shelter in a ditch by the wayside. After we had been in Woigwitz for four weeks and had endured great hardships most of the time — the women and girls suffered most — the village was evacuated and we were sent to Kanth, where the Russians made us work on the arterial road. They made me inter dead soldiers, bury carcasses, drag parts of abandoned vehicles up the embankment on the side of the road, and in fact, clean up the road in general. From Kanth we were taken to Kriebowitz, where they gave us a room in Prince Bluecher's castle, the interior of which had been damaged. During Easter-week the castle was turned into a field hospital, and we were moved into the servants' quarters. We stayed there until the Friday before Whitsun and then returned home. So much for my short, chronological account. It is impossible to describe the suffering and hardship we endured. We — my sister, my old aunt of eighty-two, an old servant of ours who was an invalid, and the rest of us — were obliged to make the whole journey on foot. Twenty of us were crowded together in one small room. The Russians molested us practically every night. The cross we had to bear was indeed a heavy one, but it was a blessed one for it was the cross borne by Christ. Never in all our lives did we pray so fervently. Some nights we said the Rosary five times, until we were exhausted. I said the penance and the absolution again and again, and some nights, when we thought our end had come, I blessed those who were with me for hours on end, uninterruptedly, until I had no strength left in my hand.

We would gladly have died, for we were all of us prepared for death. On Quinquagesima Sunday, all the members of the congregation took Holy Communion after the absolution had been said. When we were driven out of the house during the night of Ash Wednesday we all of us thought the Russians were going to shoot us. We no longer cared for the things of this world. I know of many persons, who, I might say, were somehow disappointed because God did not want us to sacrifice our lives. I saw many acts of heroism and self-sacrifice committed by men and women who, in these dreadful times, manifested the spirit not only of true Christians but of saints.

And now to return to the favour I would like to ask of you. When I was turned out of my house all I was wearing was a coat lined with fur, a fur cap, shoes, part leather and felt, but no waistcoat nor jacket. A working-class family in Woigwitz gave me a suit, and another family in Kriebowitz gave me a pair of shoes, some shirts, and socks. I am enclosing a list of all the things that I need, and I should be deeply grateful if you and your chaplain would remember me if you have any of these things to spare. Father Geisler who, together with the Reverend Moschner, visited me on his way to Breslau knows the sorry plight I am in. It has also occurred to me that perhaps you could hand on my request to the Very Reverend Archpresbyter at the next assembly and suggest that the Archpresbyterate might possibly assume a certain responsibility for Tinz and the various priests send me some of the things I need most.

The following is a list of all the things that are needed most of all. I have no cassock, no biretta (size 42), no cape, no ulster, no winter-overcoat, no hat, no boots (size 42), only three collars (size 41), no green nor purple vestments, no cope, only one alb, no rochet, and no acolytes' surplices. Perhaps some colleague or other who possesses two sets of all these things could let me have those which are no longer in such good condition. In addition, we have no ciborium and no wine receptacles. The following things are also missing: pulpit-cloths, sacred linen, three altar-cloths and coloured cloths, two and a half yards in length, and altar-cloths for two side-altars, one and a half yards in length, candelabra, chalice covers, chalice veils, coloured lectern-cloths, an ostensory and lunula, and covers for the communicants' bench. I am badly in need of a suit, as the one which I was given is rather too small and very shabby by now. In addition, there is no waistcoat to it and I really look "needy" in it. I should be very grateful for some shirts, handkerchiefs, towels, and bed-linen. I have to sleep on a sofa without either a bed-sheet or bedding, and am obliged to use a cushion for a pillow and an eiderdown that I found somewhere, to cover myself with. Please give my kindest regards to Father Geisler and the Reverend Moschner and let them read this letter, and also remember me to Father Richter, who was ordained with me. — I should also be very grateful for a few razor blades, as I am at present wearing a beard. — If any colleague has two breviaries, I should be very grateful if he would kindly let me have one of them. I only managed to salvage two volumes out of the dirt and rubbish and they are in a very bad condition. I have lost all my books, and should therefore be very glad to receive some as soon as the mail service is operating again.

Have you seen the Church Gazette, No. 2, of July 25th, 1945? It contains a list of the sixty-eight priests in our diocese who have perished since the invasion. I received the Gazette through a messenger.

Think of me in your prayers as I always remember and shall remember all those who have been kind to me, in my prayers every day.

Many thanks in advance and my kindest regards and wishes,

Yours sincerely,
Meisel."

Report No. 184

An Account of the Death of Archpresbyter Maximilian Roesler,
of Zobten on the Bober

(born December 11, 1872, ordained June 21, 1899, shot February 14, 1945)

"The Russians reached Zobten on February 14th, 1945. We had intended leaving prior to their arrival, but we were unable to find a car or any other kind of conveyance to move the thirty-five patients we had at the time. We went to ask the advice of Archpresbyter Roesler, who would have gone with us had we left, but seeing that we were obliged to stay in Zobten, he also remained behind. He later came and

told us that the Russians had arrived in Zobten and that he was going to celebrate Holy Mass. Some time afterwards he returned once more and gave us some instructions as to what we were to do.

On February 15th, 1945, his niece, Miss Maria Roesler, was admitted to our hospital. She had been shot in the hands and face, and was covered with blood. She told us that her uncle was lying dead in the cellar of his house and that his last words had been, "Christ, have mercy on me!" I bandaged Miss Roesler's wounds and looked after her. She stayed with us until we were forced to leave, and then went with us.

Next day, I suggested to our Mother Superior that we should go along to the vicarage to ascertain what had happened. As soon as the shelling ceased we set off. Some Germans were just in the act of carrying the body of Archpresbyter Roesler out of the cellar, when we reached the vicarage. They placed him on a sofa in one of the rooms upstairs. There was a bullet-wound in his forehead. We knelt in prayer for some time, and then returned to the hospital. When I asked Miss Roesler what exactly had happened, she told me that a Russian had come to the house and asked her uncle for alcohol. The latter had given him some wine, but apparently he was not satisfied with that. It was not until a fortnight later that the Russians gave permission for Archpresbyter Roesler to be buried. Some of the Germans and Russians brought his body to the convent and dug a grave under one of the windows of the church and buried him there.

Report No. 185

"Thank you very much indeed for the book (*The Martyrdom of Silesian Priests*). I was deeply moved when I read it and it made me realize the great danger we were in, in those days. Every time we heard the heavy footsteps of Russians in the hospital we trembled with fear, for we had been told to wait and see what they intended to do with us. My heart nearly stopped beating every time a Russian opened the door. During the night of February 14th to 15th, 1945, the grave-digger, who had hidden at the vicarage, brought Miss Roesler to our hospital. Her condition was very serious. She had been shot in the mouth and face and also in both hands, as she had tried to protect her face. It was a mystery to us how the grave-digger had managed to carry her up the hill to the hospital, for she was at death's door and the blood was streaming from her face and hands, and, in any case, the man's life was in great danger, too. I helped to dress Miss Roesler's wounds, and she managed to tell us that her uncle, Archpresbyter Roesler, had been shot by Russians in the cellar at the vicarage. They had wanted him to give them some alcohol, but he had none. As he was bending down to get a bottle of wine which he intended giving them they shot him in the neck. Death must have occurred instantaneously. His niece was wounded because she tried to protect him...

Report No. 186

Father Johannes Rothkegel, of Reichbergen
(born October 7, 1900, ordained February 15, 1925, died September 26, 1945)

"Father Johannes Rothkegel, who was parish-priest of Reichbergen, near Kanth in the district of Breslau, at the time of his death, was mishandled by the Russians to such an extent that his health was seriously impaired and he finally succumbed to typhus.

Despite the fact that he was a priest, he was mishandled, like countless other persons, by the Russians when they seized Reichbergen. At the beginning of March, 1945, he was abducted by the Russians and forced to work for them for three weeks. On the day that he returned to his parish he was once more arrested and taken to Upper Silesia, where the Russians forced him to work for them for another nine weeks. He finally contracted typhus after looking after some of his parishioners who were suffering from this disease. He was ill for six weeks and died on September 26th, 1945."

Report No. 187

An Account of the Death of Father Erich Scholtyssek, of Rentschen,
near Zuellichau-Schwiebus
(born February 28, 1906, ordained February 2, 1930, shot January 31, 1945)

"At seven o'clock in the morning, on January 30th, 1945, Father Scholtyssek celebrated early mass for the last time. At about half-past eight the first lot of Russian tanks rolled into Rentschen. They remained in the village until about five o'clock in the afternoon without molesting us, and then moved on. Soon afterwards Russian reinforcements arrived in the village. In the course of the evening, one of the Russians threatened to shoot us because we had no watches to give him, since we had already been deprived of them previously. After this incident Father Scholtyssek said, "Let us say the Rosary together, for who knows whether we shall still be alive tomorrow morning!" During the night we could hear the sound of heavy firing in the neighbouring village of Muehlbock, and for this reason Father Scholtyssek went across to the church and fetched the ciborium containing the Hosts, so as to enable us to take Holy Communion. In the meantime German troops arrived in the village and engaged in combat with the Russian tank units. Some time afterwards the wooden shed adjoining the vicarage caught fire. At about half-past eight in the morning, whilst we were trying to extinguish the fire, four Russian soldiers entered the vicarage yard and proceeded to search Father Scholtyssek. The only things he had in his possession were his rosary and his breviary. They then told him that he would have to go along to the Russian commanding officer with them. When we objected they told us that we need have nothing to fear and that Father Scholtyssek would soon be back again. I wanted to go with him, but

he told me it would be better if I remained with the others and helped to put out the fire, he would be back again soon, in any case.

He failed to return, however, and as we heard nothing more of him we assumed that the Russians had taken him away. During the next few days we were not allowed out of the house. About a fortnight later the village was evacuated and we were sent to a place about nine miles further eastwards. Two weeks later we were allowed to return to Rentschen. Not long after our return some children, who were driving out the cows to pasture, found Father Scholtyssek's body lying near a gravel-pit on the outskirts of the village. There was a small bullet-wound in the back of his head, near to his right ear. The bodies of about fifteen soldiers lay in a heap close to the spot where he was found. It was impossible to ascertain whether he had been shot intentionally or killed by accident, for the fighting was still in progress when the Russians came to take him away. It is also possible that some German soldier or other, who was wounded, called out to him for help as he was already returning from the headquarters of the Russian commanding officer, and that he met his death in this way. If that was the case, then he must have met his death in the village and his body must have been moved to the spot where it was found. He was found on March 1st, 1945, and on March 5th, 1945, the Polish administrative authorities in the village gave permission for him to be buried. We interred him at the spot where he had been found.

I should like to add in conclusion that we found the ciborium and the Hosts hidden in the cellar at the vicarage, when we returned to Rentschen. Things happened so quickly that Father Scholtyssek had no chance to tell us where he had hidden the ciborium or to celebrate Holy Communion with us. To prevent the Hosts from being desecrated, we and the rest of Father Scholtyssek's faithful flock who had remained in the village celebrated Holy Communion with them."

Report No. 188

Archpresbyter Franz Siebner, of Liebenau/NM.

(born September 2, 1882, ordained June 22, 1907, shot in 1945)

„After seizing the village, the Russians proceeded to raid and search all the houses every evening. As it was not advisable to remain in the house alone, we went along to Mr. Max P.'s (the churchwarden). Next morning Miss R. came to the house in a state of great agitation and gave us the following account of what had happened.

On the previous evening, at about nine o'clock, six or eight Russians had appeared at the vicarage. They had taken Archpresbyter Siebner into one of the rooms and had never let him out of their sight for a moment. After he had given them some brandy, wine, and cigars, some of them started searching the rooms at the back of the house. One of the men was a lieutenant, who was apparently more decent than the rest,

for he grumbled at some of the others for wanting to take more than one cigar. Miss R. had then left the room for a few moments in order to ascertain whether the Russians had raided the kitchen and the pantry. When she returned the room was empty and she assumed that Archpresbyter Siebner had probably fled to the church for safety. She thereupon went across to the church, but failed to find him. As no one was allowed to be out in the streets at night, she spent the night in the church and hid in the large chest used to store carpets. Early next morning some Russians found her there and tried to rape her. She defended herself with all her strength, whereupon the Russians started knocking her down and pulling her up again by her hair. She told them that she would rather die than be raped by them. Thereupon they made her kneel on the altar-steps and one of them levelled his rifle at her neck. One of the others, who possibly admired her courage, then told her to get out of the church as fast as she could. She had thereupon hastened to Mr. P.'s. We were all of us greatly alarmed as to what could have happened to Archpresbyter Siebner. Two days later a Pole came to the house and told us that he had been found shot dead in front of Mr. M.'s house, which was next-door to the school. Eight persons, including Mr. M.'s eight-year old son, were shot at Mr. M.'s house. As no one ventured out of doors, Mr. M. buried the bodies himself in his garden. He interred the bodies of Archpresbyter Siebner and his little son in his flower-garden. As Mr. M. could not, of course, obtain any coffins, he wrapped all the bodies in sheets. We all of us came to the conclusion that Archpresbyter Siebner had most probably assumed that Miss R. had sought shelter at Mr. M.'s and that he had been on his way there when he was murdered. As no one was allowed out on the street at night the Russians shot him, without, however, knowing who he was. Some weeks later Miss R. received permission from the Russian commanding officer to have Archpresbyter Siebner's body buried in the cemetery, but the parishioners were not allowed to attend the funeral."

Report No. 189

The following monks died in Neustadt on March 23rd, 1945:

Father Georg Simon

(born September 1, 1873, ordained June 23, 1900)

former provincial of his order,

and

Father Adalbert Mrosik

(born November 1, 1889, ordained April 23, 1922)

"They were both evacuated with the rest of the members of St. Joseph's Monastery to the town by the Russians when the monastery became part of the fighting zone. Neither of them was strong enough to endure such exertions and dropped behind when the rest of the members of the monastery were sent to the town. At about the beginning of May

(about five weeks later), their bodies were found halfway between the monastery and the town. Father Adalbert had two bullet-wounds in the head (we assume that he probably got caught in the defensive fire of the German troops), but in the case of Father Georg it was impossible to ascertain what the cause of death had been. We assume that he died of exhaustion and heart-failure.

Father Josef Kiera

(born April 6, 1881, ordained June 22, 1907)

died in Ratibor on April 30, 1945, from the effects of the exertions he was obliged to endure in the course of an evacuation, which was carried out by the Russians solely for the purpose of looting.

Report No. 190

The following priests were murdered in Birkenau:

Archpresbyter Dean Anton Winkler, parish-priest of Birkenau
(born December 13, 1875, ordained June 22, 1901, shot and burnt to death on January 26, 1945)

Father Wilhelm Dropalla, deputy parish-priest of Birkenau
(born January 10, 1907, ordained January 29, 1933, shot in 1945)

Father Paul Kutscha, retired curate, of Birkenau
(born June 26, 1911, ordained April 5, 1936, shot January 29, 1945)

Father Bernhard Klodwig, member of the Order of Redemptorists
(born September 7, 1897, ordained April 15, 1928, shot on February 8 th or February 9th, 1945)

"If the entire parish is evacuated the priest is to accompany his parishioners, but if the Party leaders flee and leave the population in the lurch, then the priest will remain with his parishioners, — this was the decision reached by the clergy of Upper Silesia at the conferences they held to discuss what steps must be taken, as the Russian danger became more and more imminent. And practically all the priests in Upper Silesia remained true to their resolution. Most of the curates refused to desert their parish-priests. About forty-five priests in Upper Silesia met their death because they remained with their flock faithfully to the bitter end.

The parishioners of Birkenau mourn the death of four of their priests. The first lot of Russian troops had passed through the village, and, in the course of fierce combats with German police units, had captured Gleiwitz. The inhabitants of Birkenau had just begun to hope that they would be spared when a Cossack unit arrived in the village and promptly began to commit the most dreadful atrocities.

On January 25th, two Cossacks rode up to the front door of the vicarage on horseback and demanded hay for their horses. The housekeeper and the maid thereupon ran to the hay-loft, followed by Father Dropalla. On hearing shots, the housekeeper cautiously hastened back to the house and discovered Archpresbyter Winkler lying on a pile of records which the Russians had dragged off the shelves. She was so terrified that she ran away. Not long afterwards clouds of smoke were seen issuing from the house. The vicarage was completely destroyed by fire and Archpresbyter Winkler's body was burnt beyond recognition. He had lived at the vicarage for thirty-seven years and had led his flock wisely and well. During the years of unrest after World War I, when Polish insurrections and plebiscites had destroyed the unity of the population, he had been a true father to his parishioners. On numerous occasions he had most courageously opposed the demands made by the National Socialist Party leaders and had prevented many an injustice from being committed. His grateful parishioners later erected a small shrine of the Madonna to his memory, in front of the new vicarage.

Father Dropalla had been appointed as deputy parish-priest for Archpresbyter Winkler, as the latter had suffered from arthritis for the past few years and had difficulty in getting about. The only persons who had fled from Birkenau prior to the arrival of the Russians were some of the Party members. Father Dropalla therefore remained in the village in order to be with the parishioners and the parish-priest in the hour of their need.

When he heard shots being fired in the vicarage he hid in the hay. It was never ascertained what his movements were after that, but ten days later his frozen corpse was found among the rushes in the village-pond. It is assumed that Father Dropalla intended fleeing to Kozlov during the night and was caught by a Russian sentry, who shot him. A large stone by the pond marks the spot where his body was found. A marble slab and a picture of St. John the Baptist on the outside wall of the Chapel of St. John Nepomuk commemorates his name.

Curate Kutscha did much valuable work in the parish of Rauden until he contracted laryngeal tuberculosis and could no longer perform his pastoral duties. He returned to his parents' home in Birkenau, a dying man. The doctors had already given him up, and his voice was so weak that one could hardly understand what he said. Lying there in his tiny room upstairs in his parents' house, he longed for death.

The day after Archpresbyter Winkler had been killed, Russian soldiers raided his parents' house and rushed upstairs into his room. They pulled him out of bed and dragged him down the stairs and outside to the back of the house. His relatives heard shots being fired, but were too terrified to venture out of the house. It was not until a couple of hours afterwards that they found him huddled up against the wall of the house. He was still alive, but had been seriously wounded. The only words he said which his relatives managed to understand were, "Cover me up, I'm so cold." He died two days later.

Father Bernhard Klodwig spent the last weeks of his life in utter self-sacrifice and self-effacement. Throughout the siege and subsequent capture of Gleiwitz by the Russians he brought spiritual solace and comfort to hundreds of inhabitants in the town and celebrated Holy Communion with them regularly. He truly deserved to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

After the deaths of Archpresbyter Winkler and the two curates in Birkenau, Father Bernhard was appointed deputy parish-priest there for the time being by his superiors. Soon after his arrival in Birkenau one of the villagers asked him if he would be so kind as to take the sacrament to her parents in Rauden. He promised to do so. Despite the fact that certain members of the Church advised him not to go to Rauden, as he would be obliged to go through the forest which was occupied by the Russians and fighting was still in progress there, and despite the fact that the snow lay high and Rauden was a couple of hours' walk away from Birkenau, Father Bernhard refused to be deterred from keeping his promise.

As he was proceeding through the forest he was arrested by Russians. At his request they took him to the people he was going to visit in Rauden. Instead of being pleased to see him, the latter were very surprised, for their daughter had not informed them that the priest of Birkenau would be calling on them. To make matters worse, the woman then said to Father Bernhard, "The Russians probably think you're a spy," a statement which promptly aroused the suspicions of the Russians. Father Stebel assumes that the Russians probably knew no German at all, but at least understood the word, "spy", and thereupon came to the conclusion that Father Bernhard actually was a spy. They allowed him to administer the sacrament. They then led him out of the house, smashed his skull with the butt-ends of their rifles, and shot him in the neck. He was buried in a mass grave, about three hundred yards away from the house, together with several German soldiers. Father Bernhard was murdered either on February 8th or February 9th, 1945.

On Corpus Christi Day his body was exhumed and taken to Gleiwitz, where it was interred by monks of the religious order of which he had been a member. During the exhumation the bodies of the soldiers who had been buried in the same grave were found to be in an advanced stage of putrefaction, whereas Father Bernhard's body, which lay underneath the other bodies, was hardly decomposed at all."

SECTION VII

Silesian Concentration Camps²⁵²

- 1) Breslau
- 2) Glatz
- 3) Lamsdorf
- 4) Neisse
- 5) Trebnitz
- 6) Wuenschelburg

*Report No. 191***Kletschkau Prison, Breslau**²⁵³

... After being subjected to most inhuman treatment in the Polish militia prison in Trebnitz for six weeks, we were taken to Kletschkau Prison in Breslau on November 12th, 1945. At first, conditions there seemed slightly better than in Trebnitz. At least, we got rid of our lice. The attitude of the Polish militia towards German prisoners, however, remained unchanged. In former times there had always been about five hundred prisoners at Kletschkau, but now there were about eight thousand, Germans and Poles, all crowded together. Six men were confined in each of the tiny cells, which had an area of about eight square yards. The only things the cells contained were some straw mattresses on the floor, a stool, a tiny table, and a bucket which we were obliged to use when we had to relieve nature. As it was by no means adequate as regards our requirements, we were forced to empty it out of the barred window at night. Two men had to share one straw mattress, and even when the weather was bitterly cold, as for instance during the winter of 1945 to 1946, they only had one cover between them. During the day the small fan-light in each of the cells had to be left open. At night we had to place all our clothes, with the exception of our shirts and pants, on the small table in the cell and this was then moved out into the corridor. What we suffered in cold weather can well be imagined. Many of the prisoners developed frost-bite and died. The food we received was very poor. In the mornings we were supposed to receive half a pound of bread and a pint of coffee, at noon and in the evenings one and a half pints of barley-broth. Actually, all we got most of the time was barley-broth, which bore no resemblance

²⁵² This type of prison was to be found in practically every town, however small it might be

²⁵³ s. *Beutraege*, Vol V, p. 255 ff

whatsoever to broth, but was so thin and watery that we drank it without bothering to use the spoons which had been given us — four weeks after we arrived at the prison. We received a mess tin full of water between six of us once a day to wash in! We none of us possessed a comb, a mirror, a towel, or any other personal toilet requisites. Once a fortnight, and sometimes only once a month, we were shaved, more often than not by someone who did not even know how to handle a razor properly. The poor victims usually looked as though they had been butchered. In view of these circumstances most of us grew beards. Whenever we had a chance to get anywhere near to the cart containing the potatoes which were used for horse-fodder we would snatch at them like wild animals, regardless of the driver who would lash at us with his whip. When we managed to grab a few we gulped them down raw. As a result, cases of dysentery were constantly occurring and many of the patients died. My weight dropped at an alarming rate from 16 stone to less than 10 stone in no time. Many of the prisoners died of starvation or dropsy, and countless deaths occurred as a result of ill-treatment. Forty-six of the prisoners who were transferred to Kletschkau from the prison-camp in Sagan in September, 1945, had died by the time I was released. It can safely be estimated that one-third of the prisoners at Kletschkau never saw their families again. Those who died were stripped to the skin, placed in a delivery-van, covered up with a few rags, and then interred in a mass grave. My best friend and companion, who had shared my joys and sorrows, died in prison, without ever seeing his family again. Only those who were at death's door were sent to the prison-doctor, and as there were no medical supplies available, the medical treatment they received consisted solely in the doctor diagnosing their disease. Those who were admitted to the prison hospital were as good as dead. In August, 1946, the Poles began to resort to even more drastic terrorist measures than before, as far as the Germans were concerned. Every day someone or other was fetched out of the cells and dragged out into the corridor and kicked and beaten. The cells and corridors re-echoed with the screams and moans of those who were tortured in this way. The effect which all this had on us was dreadful, and most of us began to doubt whether we should ever get out of this inferno alive. Our cells were frequently searched and we were deprived of even the most trifling objects found in our possession. On one occasion I found part of an old sock and unravelled it so as to have some darning-wool, but I was promptly deprived of it next time our cell was searched. At first we were allowed to correspond with our relatives, but the Poles soon put a stop to this. In any case, we were unable to send letters to Germany as we had no money to pay for the postage. Once a fortnight we were allowed to receive a six-pound parcel from home. As they were not allowed to travel by train, the women used to trek to the prison on foot, in order to bring us our parcels. Some of them walked sixty miles and more and came from as far away as Lueben, Glogau, and Hirschberg. When they handed over the parcels to the Poles in the prison post-office they were usually beaten by the latter. And when we went to pick

up our parcels at the post-office we, too, were ill-treated. Eventually the women stopped bringing us parcels, in view of the brutal treatment to which they and we were subjected. We always had to call out our names and our number in Polish when we lined up in the prison-yard, and anyone who made a mistake because he did not know Polish was in for a bad time. On one occasion, one of the prisoners who did not know any Polish called out the wrong number instead of thirty. He thereupon received thirty strokes on his face. The worst part of it all was that we were not employed in any way.

Report No. 192

Glatz ²⁵⁴

Polish Terrorism in Concentration Camps

... When the Polish authorities took over the civil administration, before governmental questions had even been settled, they promptly and unexpectedly set about arresting thousands of Germans, including men and women of all professions and classes. Among the victims imprisoned in the Polish prisons and concentration camps there were not only members of the intelligentsia, who, in any case, were arrested on principle, but also important businessmen, small tradesmen, officials, employees, workmen, and farmers, and they were all imprisoned regardless of whether they had been members of the National Socialist Party or not. As the large prison in Glatz was not big enough to house all of them, additional prisons and camps were set up in cellars and in some of the houses in the town. There were two prisons of this type in Gruenen Street und two in Wagner Street and Zimmer Street, in the old garrison there. There were a hundred to two hundred prisoners in each of these prisons. Incidentally, there were no sanitary installations of any kind in these cellars. Most of the windows were nailed up with boards, and there was thus hardly any light or air in the cellars. The prisoners were obliged to sleep on the stone floor. Pedestrians in the street were not allowed to pass the door of the prison; Polish militiamen, attired in old S. A. uniforms and armed with cudgels and rifles, drove everyone over to the other side of the street. At night the screams of the prisoners who were being mishandled re-echoed through the street, despite the fact that the Poles tried to drown the noise by turning on their wireless sets as loudly as they possibly could...

I was arrested by the Polish police on August 2nd, after various attempts to murder me secretly — as for instance, by firing at me in the street — had failed. My secretary was also arrested, although I was not aware of this at the time, and the Poles tried to force her to make statements which would incriminate me, by maltreating her.

²⁵⁴ s *Betraege*, Vol V, p. 259 ff

I spent the first night, after my arrest, in a coal-cellar with my other fellow-victims. Next morning the Poles robbed me of all my belongings. They made me take off my suit, shoes, and underclothing, and in their stead gave me some tattered garments to put on, which, as I very soon discovered, were full of vermin. Then they shaved my head — a procedure which was adopted in the case of all the prisoners — and painted a number on my back. I was convict No. 189. After that, they locked me up in a dark cell, where I remained for the next fortnight. There were eleven of us crowded together in the cell, which had neither a window nor electric light. As there was only room for six persons at the most, we had to take turns at lying down on the stone floor. There was a leaky water-pipe in the cellar and the floor was always wet.

In the evenings the Poles resorted to their usual methods of ill-treating the prisoners. They would turn on the wireless or else a group of Poles would start playing accordions outside the cells. As soon as we heard them we knew that the torture was due to begin. The Poles then dragged the prisoners out of the cells, one after another, and started beating them with rubber cudgels, rubber tubing, wooden cudgels, and clubs. On numerous occasions some of the prisoners had their teeth knocked out. I was dragged out of the cell a number of times and was treated most brutally — on two occasions in the presence of some of the female prisoners. On another occasion I fainted whilst they were maltreating me, whereupon they poured cold water over me to revive me and then started beating me again. When the labour-exchange doctor who had been appointed by the Poles, for the purpose of ascertaining which prisoners were fit to work, examined me he certified me as unfit to work for at least three months, as, in addition to external injuries, four of my ribs were broken and my kidneys were so seriously injured that they were floating. The female prisoners were frequently raped by the Poles. One of my fellow-prisoners, Mr. Grosspietsch, of Glatz, was beaten to death outside the cell. A German police employee was beaten to such an extent that he died an hour afterwards. When the Poles kicked him into the cell after maltreating him, blood and excrements flowed out of his anus. When he was dead the Poles dragged him out of the cell and shot him in the head in the presence of the other prisoners. Polish guards made two of the prisoners, an innkeeper, of Glatz, and another man, wrestle with one another. After a while both the men were given rubber cudgels, and the Poles, who beat them at the same time, made them beat each other. A disabled ex-serviceman who was suffering from a chronic ulcer was refused medical treatment. What happened to him eventually, I do not know as I was released whilst he was still in the prison. When I saw him for the last time the lower part of his leg was so swollen that it measured about 15 inches. A former major had his eyes beaten out with rubber cudgels and died a few hours later of the injuries he had sustained. A post-office clerk by the name of Ohr was also killed. Numerous other persons died as a result of the treatment they were subjected to, but I cannot remember all their names.

We received no medical treatment whatsoever. Most of us were suffering from dysentery as a result of being confined in cold cellars, but we managed to remedy this trouble somewhat by eating wood-ashes, which we obtained from the kitchen stove. Our daily food ration consisted of three ounces of bread and a plate of soup. We were allowed to receive a small amount of food from relatives and friends, but most of these gifts were stolen by the Polish guards. At noon we had to line up in the corridor in front of a bench on which there were a few plates of soup. We then had to step up to the bench in turn and gulp down a plate of soup as fast as we could. We were not allowed to sit down. During this procedure the Poles usually beat us, and when we had finished our soup they chased us back into the cells and beat us on the way. The last person in the queue was usually called back to the bench and given an additional beating. After spending a fortnight in the dark cell I was transferred to a cell which had two windows. Once a week we were taken out into the prison-yard, where the Poles forced us to do all kinds of drill and sing patriotic songs. We were usually maltreated on these occasions. When I think of the way some of my fellow-prisoners were treated when they were interrogated by the Poles I am bound to admit that my interrogation was conducted fairly humanely! All they tried to do was intimidate me by firing shots in the next room and telling me about agents who had just been shot.

One evening I was unexpectedly taken along to the interrogation-room, where three members of the Polish police asked me for full particulars regarding my family, work, etc., and wanted to know whether I would be prepared to join the Polish police. When I told them no, they had me sent back to the cell again. The last time I was maltreated was on September 6th, — for picking up a book, "The Art of Rhetoric" (published in 1894!), in the prison-yard and taking it into my cell... The Poles beat me with the butt-ends of their rifles and kicked me in the stomach until I finally collapsed. One evening, a few days after this incident, I was once more taken along to the interrogation-room and was again asked whether I would be willing to co-operate with the Polish police. I answered in the affirmative on this occasion! The Poles then made me sign a written statement to the effect that I bound myself to co-operate with the PUBP. In addition, I also had to sign a statement pledging me to secrecy, as regards my experiences whilst in prison, and threatening me with punishment if I failed to keep this pledge. Needless to say, I do not regard this pledge as valid, since Gestapo methods of the most evil kind were used to make me sign it. Moreover, it was by no means a voluntary pledge nor one which was legally justified or founded. The Polish secret police now employed me as an agent against Czechoslovakia, for there was at that time considerable tension between the Czechs and the Poles. In addition, I also had to pledge myself to remain in Glatz and to place my services at the disposal of the Polish authorities whenever they might need me. The various Polish authorities, however, did not work hand in hand, so

when I received my expulsion papers from the office of the Polish administrative head of the district I refrained from informing the Polish secret police of this fact, and tried to get out of the country by train. Two German friends and a Jewish friend, Manfred Schild, of Breslau, whom I had helped for a considerable length of time, joined me in this venture. When we reached Kamenz, however, we were arrested and were taken to Frankenstein, where we were detained in a cellar similar to the one in Glatz — this type of prison was to be found in practically every town, however small it might be. We were robbed of all our belongings, but fortunately were released next day. We then returned to Glatz on foot. As my friends were unwilling to attempt a venture of this kind a second time, I contacted the Czech secret police and, thanks to their aid and the help of some Russian soldiers, succeeded in fleeing to Austria, via Czechoslovakia.

Report No. 193

The Victims of Lamsdorf ²⁵⁵

Statistics vary considerably as regards the number of persons who were burnt to death in the wooden sheds at the camp in Lamsdorf. Threatening me with his revolver, the camp commander, Gimborski, forced me to witness this dreadful massacre and made me have the bodies of the victims removed to three different spots, so that the survivors would not be able to estimate how many persons lost their lives. I did, however, count the bodies which were interred by some of the men, women, and children interned at the camp and not by the official parties entrusted with this task, and made the following list:

42 men and 18 women (shot);

9 men and 6 women (perished during the fire);

7 men and 3 women (dragged out of the sick-ward and thrown into the mass grave; they were either shot beforehand, or else rendered unconscious by blows and thrown into the mass grave alive);

28 men and 19 women (died next day or a few hours afterwards from the injuries or bullet-wounds they received in the course of the dreadful catastrophe).

Statistics regarding the total number of persons who were murdered or died in Lamsdorf also vary considerably. The exact figures will probably never be ascertained as no records were kept at the camp of those who were shot and beaten to death. The hospital-staff was not even allowed to keep a record of those who died in hospital. Nevertheless, from October, 1945, onwards we secretly kept a diary. When I

²⁵⁵ s. *Beitraege*, Vol V, p. 227

left the camp I entrusted this diary to the care of Lucie W., of Bielitz, who was employed at the hospital as a nurse, and asked her to look after it and put it in some safe place. I had also drawn a graph, showing the number of cases of sickness and deaths, and managed to smuggle it out of the camp when I left. The list I gave the commander of the camp was a forged one.

From July to October about fifteen persons died in hospital every day, from October to November there were about eight to ten deaths every day, whilst in December, January, and February, 1946, the daily number of deaths increased to twenty. These figures do not, of course, include the countless persons who were shot or beaten to death, nor do they include the victims of the massacres of July 27th and October 4th, 1945, nor all those who were released from the camp allegedly for the purpose of being expelled, and were then taken to Neisse and died of starvation and disease in the casemates there; nor do they include all those who were taken to Jawoschnov during the months from October to December, 1945, to work in the mines, and died there, nor those who were taken to Falkenberg or Oppeln by camp-guards, allegedly in order to be interrogated, and never returned. Thus only an approximate estimate of the number of persons who died in Lamsdorf can be given. About seven thousand persons were taken to the camp in Lamsdorf, and, according to my estimate, only about five per cent of this number are still alive.²⁵⁶

Report No. 194

Neisse²⁵⁷

The Concentration Camp in Koch Street

... My sufferings as a prisoner in Polish captivity began on Saturday, June 2nd.

I had just stepped outside, after finishing my soup, when a civilian and a Russian, wearing the uniform of the Young Communists Movement, came up to me and asked me if I was Mr. S. I had no idea who the civilian was. He informed me that I was suspected of having mishandled Poles. I denied this accusation. The young Russian, who was about twenty-six, thereupon hit me in the face and shouted, "You fat German pig, never worked, only eat and drink, hit workers, and go with women." I objected to this accusation most strongly, whereupon he hit me in the face a second time. Then they marched me off, allegedly to interrogate me. They took me to the cellar in the boys' school, where four Russians promptly seized hold of me and began beating me. Blood streamed

²⁵⁶ Cf pamphlet, *Die Ostdeutsche Tragödie — eine Frage an das Weltgewissen. III Folge. Die Hölle von Lamsdorf und andere Vernichtungslager.* Lippstadt, Ostarchiv

²⁵⁷ s *Beitraege*, Vol V, p. 137

out my nose, mouth, and ears, and finally I collapsed. When I came to again, one of the Russians handed me a basin of water and ordered me to "wash and laugh again"! I decided that it would probably be wisest to comply with this order. Two Russians then took me along to a villa in Koch Street, which had been converted into a Polish prison camp, and handed me over to the Poles. The much-dreaded interrogation-room was on the second floor. Several brutal-looking young fellows, armed with sticks and cudgels, were already assembled there. They first of all took down my personal data. Then they deprived me of my wallet, containing 900 Reichsmarks and all my papers. At intervals they gave me a thorough beating and mishandled me. The "Commandant", a young fellow of about eighteen, pulled my rings off my fingers and put them on his own. After they had thrashed me for about half an hour they ordered me to crawl down the stairs on all fours. This I did with such agility so as to escape another beating, that I actually reached the bottom of the stairs before my persecutors, much to their amusement. One of the Poles then unlocked the cellar and pushed me in. Trembling all over, I staggered along a passage until I came to a room, about 15 by 18 feet in size, in which about fifty other victims were sitting huddled together. There were a number of people whom I knew. An inspector with whom I was acquainted greeted me with the words, "Hello, Fritz, — so you've landed here as well. You're in for a few surprises. We've been here a fortnight!" Some of us lay on straw mattresses and some of us on the floor. Conditions were most unhygienic, and it was not long before I, too, was covered with lice. For days on end we were not even given a chance to have a wash. One morning, as I was going to fetch my breakfast ration, the Poles asked me whether I had had a beating yet. I told them I had had enough to last! They thereupon made me bend over a stool and dealt me five heavy blows with a stick. Then they asked me once more whether I had had a beating, and I replied, tearfully, that I had had enough, and, in any case, had never done anyone any harm. At that they made me bend over again and gave me another five strokes. One of my fellow-prisoners whispered to me that I must answer no, if they asked me again. So when they asked me again whether I had had a beating I said no, and after that they let me alone. At roll-call in the morning the Poles asked for volunteers to drive to a sawmill about three miles off and fetch some boards. Despite the fact that my whole body was covered with weals from the beating I had received and they burned like fire, I volunteered at once, in order to have a chance to get out of the stuffy cellar. The Polish sentry who took us to the sawmill was an elderly man and he treated us very decently. He could speak German and used to talk to us now and again, and, in fact, often told us not to lose heart. I was lucky enough to be allowed to go out with this working party every day until I was moved from the prison on June 20th. In fact, on one occasion the working party saved me from experiencing a most unpleasant incident at the camp. One of the prisoners had escaped, and the rest of the internees were thereupon chased down to the River Neisse and had to jump into the

water, fully clothed. The river is over six feet deep at that particular spot. Polish sentries, armed with loaded rifles, stood on the bank of the river ready to shoot at the prisoners. Many of the latter nearly drowned and were only just saved in the nick of time by some of their fellow-prisoners who were good swimmers. The Poles then ordered the prisoners to come out of the water and made them roll in the thick dust on the road in their wet clothes. They were thereupon taken back to the cellars again without being given a chance to clean their clothes. About an hour afterwards the so-called Captain appeared in the cellar, in a drunken condition and armed with a long whip. He made all the prisoners lie down on the floor in a row, and then walked back and forth along the row eight times, lashing at his poor victims as hard as he could.

Report No. 195

Trebnitz ²⁵⁸

Conditions in the Polish Militia Prison

We were arrested by Polish militia and an OGPU officer one afternoon in October, 1945, and taken to the town of Trebnitz. Incidentally, when they arrested us they searched all our rooms and stole all the things that took their fancy. When we reached Trebnitz they took me along to No. 17, Breslau Street, the house that had formerly belonged to Mr. Schitkowsky, the choirmaster, and had now become the Polish militia headquarters, and locked me up in the cellar there, where I remained for the next six weeks. The first cellar at the front of the house was used for female prisoners, next to it were two cellars for male prisoners, and the wash-house further to the rear was used for female prisoners. There were three small cellars at the back of the house which looked out onto the yard. One of them, formerly used as a coal-cellar, was a dark and gloomy hole and was now also used to house prisoners. Conditions were terrible. We were crowded together like a lot of animals. During the six weeks I was imprisoned there, we never once received any water to enable us to have a wash. Nor was there any electric light in the cell. Swarms of lice ran about on the rags on which we slept. At night they plagued us to such an extent that we hardly got a wink of sleep, but it was hopeless to try and catch them as it was so dark in the cell. There was an old bucket in each cell which we had to use when we needed to relieve nature. Needless to say, the stench from the bucket was horrible. The militia guards, most of whom were youths, took a special delight in tormenting the poor prisoners every day, either by beating or kicking them or by setting the dogs at them. They were highly amused whenever one or other of the prisoners got bitten. The wounds never had a chance to heal properly, but as a rule became infected with dirt, and then festered and grew more and more painful. There was no medical treat-

²⁵⁸ s *Beutraege*, Vol V, p. 253 ff

ment available at all. Only cases which were already hopeless were seen by a doctor, sent to hospital, and then finished up in a mass grave.

One Sunday afternoon they fetched me out of the cell and took me along to another cell. There was a Polish warder, who was drunk, and another Pole in the cell. The warder was armed with a heavy oak-stick which had an iron tip. Alternately using the tip and the thick end of the stick, the two of them now took it in turns to beat me. Then they made me crouch down and hop round the cell and sing as I hopped. It was all the same to them, what I sang, so long as some sound or other issued from my throat. If I stopped singing for a second they started belabouring me with the stick. The warder was standing in one corner of the cell and the other Pole in the opposite corner. Every time I reached a corner one of them would kick me in the stomach with such force that I fell over and rolled along the floor, whereupon the one who was standing in the opposite corner would kick me in the back and send me spinning across the floor. The warder kept jabbing the iron tip of the stick at my chest with such force that the rest of the prisoners in the room were convinced he would stab me to death. By nimbly dodging aside, however, I managed to lessen the impact of the blow. It was not until the warder grew drowsy and fell asleep that they stopped torturing me. I later heard that this same warder had already killed seventy persons by beating them to death. Covered with blood, and black and blue all over, I was eventually taken back to my cell in a state of unconsciousness. My fellow-prisoners had been obliged to look on whilst I was being tortured. In fact, they never thought I should survive. I was racked with pain, but that did not trouble the Poles. None of my fellow-prisoners could help me as we none of us had anything with which we could have dressed and bandaged my wounds. Now and again a militiaman came into the cell in order to ascertain whether I was dead! I was so utterly despondent that I was near committing suicide, and I think I should have done so had not my fellow-prisoners given me fresh hope and courage again. Most of the Germans who were imprisoned by the Poles suffered the same tortures that I had to endure. The Poles even went so far as to beat female prisoners and were particularly fond of setting big, savage dogs at them. Two days after the above incident I was taken to a room on the first floor and interrogated. Before they started interrogating me they made me bend over a chair and began beating me with a thick rubber cable. My body was still so sore from the ill-treatment I had received two days previously that I started screaming. When they heard me cry out that I had been beaten for hours on end two days before, they eventually stopped maltreating me. None of the so-called interrogations were ever conducted without the poor victims being mishandled in a dreadful manner. This was the Polish method adopted in order to force the prisoners to make some kind of a confession which would justify a sentence. In many cases the poor victims were so desperate that they confessed to crimes which they had never committed, solely to avoid being mishandled in such a bestial manner.

We had to endure all kinds of ill-treatment and indignities on the way to and from the prison whenever the Poles took us out of the cells and marched us off to work somewhere. We were not only beaten by the militia guards who escorted us, but all the Polish civilians who passed us kicked us and spat at us. The lot of the slaves in ancient days was surely not more grim than ours. On one occasion, one of the Germans complained to the prison commander about the inhuman treatment. That night he was dragged out of his cell and, clad in only his shirt, was forced to stand in the passage, which was cold and damp, whilst the Poles interrogated him for hours. After that they gave him a thorough beating, to punish him for having dared to complain. He was mishandled to such an extent that the other men in his cell had to pick him up and carry him back to his mattress. After this incident no one ventured to complain about the brutal treatment we were subjected to.

Report No. 196

Wuenschelburg ²⁵⁹

A Polish Concentration Camp

At about noon on August 1st, 1945, just after I had come in from our fields and was busy feeding the horses in the stable, four militia-men of the Polish Communist Party suddenly appeared and arrested me. My father, who had tried in vain to appease them, was likewise arrested and beaten. The Poles hated us so violently and gave vent to their hatred to such an extent that it was useless to try and remonstrate with them. The militia who arrested us were youths ranging from sixteen to twenty years of age. They were armed with all kinds of weapons, and began maltreating us before we had even left the farm, and then dragged us off to the prison in Wuenschelburg, shouting raucously and firing shots into the air all the while.

My father and I were locked up in a cell together. The cells were situated in the cellar at the townhall and were dark, damp, and cold. All the floors were of stone and there was only one plank bed in each cell. The questions put to us by the Poles were brief. "Where did you put your revolver?" "What were you going to use it for?" "Whom did you shoot?" Incidentally, I possessed no revolver. They then showed me a revolver and told me that it had been found in my house. Then they slammed the door of the cell. Soon afterwards they came and took my father away. I heard someone shout, "Trousers down! Lie down, you swine!" Then I heard the sound of blows descending on naked flesh, followed by screams, moans, and groans, and at the same time derisive laughter, jeers, oaths, and more blows. I trembled with rage and indignation at the thought that the Poles had flogged my father, an old man of sixty-eight. Then I heard a faint moaning sound, and after that

²⁵⁹ s *Beitraege*, Vol V, p. 278 ff

all was quiet. I dreaded to think of what had happened to my poor father. A few minutes later I heard the sound of heavy footsteps. Then all was quiet again. About ten minutes later I heard the sound of steps approaching the cell and then the door was opened, and I heard a Polish voice shout, "Out you get, you swine, you son of a bitch. Trousers down! Get a move on! Quick!" Before I had time to realize what they were about to do to me, four of them, an ugly grin on their faces, seized hold of me. They pulled my trousers down, and pushed me over a stool; one of them squeezed my head between his legs, one of them trod on my feet, whilst the third trod on my hands, and then they started flogging my bare thighs and posterior with a whip. I bit my lips to prevent myself from screaming, for I was determined not to let these devils see how much they were hurting me. But I was unable to control the twitching of my body, and I wriggled about like a worm whilst the lash of the whip continued to descend on my naked flesh. Then I fainted. When I came to, I felt blood trickling down my legs. The Poles stopped flogging me, and dragged me onto my feet and pushed me into the cell. I had received about thirty to forty strokes. Blood was trickling down my legs; the skin was literally raw; I could neither lie nor sit down owing to the dreadful pain I was in. I had never been so humiliated in all my life. I had been beaten like a dog until I had finally fainted. After a while I heard the sound of a key being turned and someone opened the door and brought me a basin of food. So they were apparently not going to starve me to death! But I had not the least desire to eat. My body ached and smarted so terribly that I was incapable of moving. There was another man in my cell, Mr. W., a miner, from Schlegel, and when I told him he could have my basin of food he was most grateful and ate the contents with relish. I was consumed with anxiety as to what might have happened to my father, and to the rest of my family. I did not even know whether my father was still alive or not. I fell into a doze. After a while I managed to lie on my stomach on the stone floor. Mr. W., the man who shared the cell with me, told me what had happened when the Poles had arrested him. He had not been at home when they came to take him away. So as to make sure of getting hold of him they had then arrested his wife and daughter and locked them up in the prison in Wuenschelburg until he had given himself up to the Poles of his own free will. That was how he came to be in the cell. I was consumed with worry, fear, and anxiety all night long. Next day they took me out of the cell in order to interrogate me. Once again they beat me, knocked me about, and swore at me. They read a statement to me in Polish, of which I did not understand a word, and then made me sign it. In fact, they forced me to sign it and made a gesture, the significance of which I could not fail to understand. When we reached the cell again, they shouted, "Trousers down!" I was so terrified that I began to tremble all over. They got hold of me and pinned me down as they had done on the previous day, and then proceeded to flog me, lashing at the wounds which were still raw, until I fainted. One of them then poured some cold coffee onto my back and started flogging me again,

whilst the Pole who had interrogated me kept count of the strokes. When he got to thirty he told the man who was flogging me to stop. Then they pushed me into the cell and locked the door. All was quiet again. After a while a basin of food was thrust into the cell as on the previous day, but I was too ill and too dispirited to eat. Again and again I pondered on the question as to whether the Poles were human. Hours passed. I realized that it was useless to think of escaping, for if I tried to escape the Poles would be sure to arrest my father and my wife and torture them. I would rather suffer and die than have that happen. Indeed, I felt so ill that I thought I should die. I lay on my stomach on the floor of the cell and reflected on the fate that had befallen me. Every time I heard footsteps or a noise outside the cell I trembled with fear, for I knew only too well what to expect whenever the door was wrenched open. I found it impossible to forget the bestiality of the Poles. I refused to touch the coffee and bread they brought me. I felt as if I should choke if I touched a morsel of food. Again and again I tortured my brain to try and remember some offence or other which I might have committed unknowingly and which had caused the Poles to wreak their vengeance on me, but I could think of no wrong I had done. I had been a soldier right up to the end of the war, but I had never been a Party member nor an S.S. member, nor had I ever mishandled or insulted a Pole. What did they want of me? Were they out to kill me by beating me to death? Sometimes I heard Polish voices and jeering, diabolical laughter outside the cell. My thoughts wandered on. What would happen to my family if they killed me? Where was my wife? Was my father still alive? I was consumed with fear and dread. A week before my arrest the Poles had tortured a German by the name of Tasler to death in this same cell and had then hanged him. Every night Polish militia and civilians sang and bawled and made a dreadful racket in the market square in front of the prison. My native country, my native town, in which I had lived all my life, were sadly changed. — The night seemed endless. And morning brought another day of terror and suffering.

They asked me what conditions had been like in the concentration camps, and I told them I did not know, since I had never been inside one. They thereupon beat me and took me back to the cell and told me to expect another thirty strokes that day. As it grew dark I trembled with fear every time I heard a noise outside the cell, for I knew that my torturers might arrive at any minute now. When it was quite dark in the cell they came for me and dragged me out into the corridor. I trembled all over. They cursed me, pulled my trousers down, and thrust me onto a bench. Then they began torturing me with a whip for the third time. I felt I could not endure any more strokes. I screamed, and thereupon one of the devils thrust a rag into my mouth and squeezed my head between his knees harder than ever. After every stroke they dealt me they paused for a moment so as to make me feel the pain even more. As on the two previous occasions, blood trickled down my legs, and the Poles once more poured cold coffee onto my wounds. They laughed and jeered every time I winced, and shouted, "You son of a bitch, you

German swine, you're not going to die, you're going to croak, — you're going to croak slowly but surely!" Then I fainted. When I came to again, I was lying in the cell. The pain in my back and my posterior was excruciating. — The day this happened was August 3rd, 1945. Since being in prison I had so far neither eaten nor drunk anything. I felt desperately ill, and when I thought of the treatment I had been subjected to, it seemed to me that I was no better off than those who had been tortured in the days of the Inquisition long ago. What had I left to hope for? Would they continue beating me? Did they really intend to torture me to death? I spent many hours in prayer and my thoughts gradually grew calmer, though I still trembled with fear every time I heard steps approaching the cell and the door was opened. But the Poles now let me alone. The fact that I had collapsed the third time they tortured me had apparently satisfied them, at least for the time being. Nevertheless, I suffered mental agony during the days that followed. They no longer tortured me, but I heard them torturing other prisoners in the same way as they had ill-treated me, and I was constantly haunted by the fear of being tortured again myself some day...

EPILOGUE

The Spirit of Christian Charity and Fraternity in 1945 and 1946 ²⁶⁰

When we look back to the years 1945 and 1946 they now seem like a nightmare, and the terrible suffering, hardship and fear we were forced to endure in those days somehow seem unreal. It is amazing how much man can endure and survive. Only those who shared our misery and distress can know what we suffered.

I should only like to touch on one aspect of our distress in those days — a hardship which most of us had so far never experienced — the constant worry as to our daily bread.

When I compare conditions in the West during the months prior to the currency reform which I spent there as a "normal consumer" with conditions at home, in Silesia, I realize what a wretched existence we led under the Polish regime in 1945 and 1946. From 1947 until the currency reform, that is to say whilst living in Western Germany, I was a "normal consumer" in the truest sense, — living in a strange town, with no connections, that is to say with no additional supplies of food, a "consumer" with only the usual meagre rations at his disposal. But despite all this, I felt I was rich when I thought of all the privations I had suffered in 1945 and 1946, when I was still living in my native Silesia. This no doubt explains why I was able to manage on the normal rations quite well and why I was quite satisfied with them, a fact which my Western neighbours found hard to believe and understand.

Yes, we led a wretched existence. We were all of us reduced to pauperism. The Russian invasion with all its attendant evils — atrocities, murder, and looting, the influx of the Poles — soldiers and civilians, who settled on all the farms as the rightful owners, — all this was like a storm which swept and ravaged the country, and when we once more ventured to look about us after the storm had passed we saw all the damage that had been done. Some people had been robbed by the Russians, others had been turned out of their homes by the Poles and had been forced to leave all their possessions behind and were now living with neighbours, whose home had not been coveted by the new rulers since it was not luxurious enough. A friend of mine was actually turned out of her quarters seven times. Every time she found accommodation somewhere the Poles came along and seized the house in question, and evicted her and the owners of the house who had kindly given her accommodation. The German owners were always turned out in a hurry and were obliged to leave most of the few possessions they had managed to rescue behind, so that in the end they had nothing left at all. After she had been turned out seven times my friend said to me, "Now I've even lost the only other vest I had and my toothbrush as well!" On

²⁶⁰ Separate report of April 1, 1952.

another occasion I visited a friend of mine and found her sitting on a bed in a tiny, dismal room, the few possessions she still had spread out in front of her. She told me that she shared the room with nine other persons who were complete strangers, that they were all unemployed and had nothing to eat, and that several of them were ill, but that they were all of them very good to her. Yes, it was the spirit of charity which helped us to endure these dreadful conditions. The spirit of Christian charity and fraternity was the only ray of sunshine in those dark days of 1945 and 1946. On the one hand we experienced cruelty, hatred, malice, on the other, however, sympathy, help, and self-sacrifice. The community spirit in Gruessau had always been strong, we had always felt we were united, and in the times of our greatest need this feeling was stronger than it had ever been.

Most of us stayed indoors as much as possible, for it was not safe to be out on the street. But there was one errand on which we all ventured out of the house, and that was to go to church, which we now did even more frequently than in former times. Early in the morning the villagers could be seen hastening to church, and in the afternoon we met once more before the miraculous image of the Virgin and said the Rosary together. We derived great comfort from our religious communion. When we knelt before the altar during the morning offertory we were truly one large family at the richly loaded table of our Heavenly Father. Many were the glances we exchanged when we heard the comforting words of the Gospel, "Be not therefore anxious... for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." And great was the strength we derived from His Words, "And lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." And our prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread," was more fervent than it had ever been. And the Lord gave. We were His sparrows and He fed us. The way the Lord provided for us sometimes seems like a miracle to me, for we had practically nothing to live on for a whole year. We received no ration cards whatsoever and were thus deprived of those foods which had formed the basis of our nutrition during the war. Only a few Germans, namely those who worked for the Poles — most of them were skilled workers in the weaving-mills, received a few meagre rations, whilst the rest were obliged to go empty. Most of the shops had closed down as all their goods had been stolen. The farmers were no longer their own masters on their farms, but now had to work for the Polish "masters", who were constantly on the look-out to see that none of the farm produce was given to Germans. Many of the inhabitants had no fields, no garden, and no food supplies. But God helped them in a mysterious way, — and there was always some one or other who had a little bit of bread to spare and was willing to share it with someone who was even worse off. Like the widow of Zarephath we often had only a handful of meal in a barrel when — not a prophet, but a neighbour would appear, stealthily and when it was dusk, so that the Poles would not see her, and, despite the fact that she was in great need herself, would give us a bag of flour. And when this supply was almost exhausted some other

kind soul would help us out for the next few days. We relied on our Heavenly Father to help us, for we ourselves were powerless to help ourselves. And in countless ways we experienced the miracle of His Help every day.

Potatoes in those days were precious, though nowadays we can hardly believe it! They were terribly scarce, and it always seemed like a miracle to me when I heard someone say to me in a whisper, very often in church, "You can come and fetch a few potatoes. Our Pole isn't at home today!", or "I'll take a few potatoes along to next-door for you this evening. You can pick them up there without being noticed." On such occasions we would then set off when it was dusk, but of course not after curfew at seven o'clock, and would be filled with joy at the thought of the potatoes, but also filled with fear because of the danger of being caught by the Poles. And every time we heard footsteps we would glance anxiously in the direction of the person who was approaching, to see whether he or she was wearing a white band on their sleeve. According to an order issued by the Poles, we Germans had to wear a white band, four inches wide, on our left sleeve, but we were proud to wear it and show that we were Germans, and at least it was a means of recognizing a German in the dusk. How happy we were when we got back home again safely with our precious potatoes! Many were the blessings and prayers we said for the kind donor. I am sure that our Heavenly Father will remember and bless all those who were kind to us. I was so often reminded of the saying that the poor help the poor. Many were the times when those who were poor themselves gave something of the little they had to others. I shall never forget the kind soul who gave me a basket of potatoes, because she had just received some from her brother and wanted to share them with someone who was even poorer than she was. Nor shall I ever forget the good friend who, on one occasion, asked me, "Have you any bread?"; "No," I replied. "How long is it since you had any? — What, three weeks? Oh, but that won't do! Here, take mine. My husband gets a bread ration because he's a weaver. And I can let you have a little milk every week, too." It was too good to be true. May God repay her for her kindness! And I still remember the kind old woman, who was one of the very poorest, who gave me two eggs, — the most precious things of all. And the farmer's wife, whose kindness was touching, who, when she came to church, always wore a small bag concealed on her person so that the Poles would not see it. And she always used to produce something in the way of food out of this little bag, — either a small bottle of milk, some grain, or a slice of bread with butter on it! We had almost forgotten what butter tasted like, and the days on which someone gave us a slice of bread and butter were red-letter days. I could mention scores of occasions on which those who had a few supplies helped those who were worse off than themselves and saved them from starvation when their need was greatest, by giving them a piece of bread or something else to eat. The aged, the sick, children, and those who were unemployed, and the majority of the inhabitants belonged to this last

category, were secretly provided with food by the few who still had a little. Mothers with small children were worst off. There was a woman who was a refugee from Upper Silesia living with us. She had several children, and I often saw the youngest ones taking some garment, which they had managed to save when they fled from Upper Silesia, along to one of the Poles in the neighbourhood, in the hopes that he would perhaps give them some bread or milk or something else to eat in exchange. The poor were thus forced to part with the last of their possessions in order to obtain a little food. I know of one woman who was obliged to "steal" milk for her children on her own farm because the Polish "boss" refused to let her have any. Every morning at dawn she used to climb through the kitchen window, crawl along the slanting roof of an adjoining shed as far as the dairy window, climb through it, steal some milk, and then crawl back again in fear and trembling lest she might be caught by the Poles. Nowadays we find it hard to believe that such conditions prevailed and that the Germans had no rights whatsoever. Most of us could cite scores of cases which show the spirit of charity which prevailed among the Germans. We were truly paupers, but we at least had no ballast nor burdens to encumber us, and, despite our cares and anxieties, we were happy in our freedom and rejoiced in our trust in the Lord more than we had ever done before or were likely to do in the future. We are deeply grateful to our Heavenly Father for protecting us in so miraculous a way and for showing us the true spirit of Christian charity and fraternity.

The Church and the Right of Domicile ²⁶¹

We have become a migratory people, a nomadic race. Millions of people have been rendered homeless as a result of the war and above all by the expulsion measures enforced in the Eastern German territories. A migration of the peoples of Europe began soon after World War I. On the strength of the Balkan treaties of 1919 and 1923, 1.35 million Greeks, 400,000 Turks, and 200,000 Bulgarians were transferred to other territories. More than a million Russians emigrated. After the Great War more than a million Germans were forced to leave those territories in the east which Germany had been obliged to cede. A quarter of a million Armenians escaped extermination by fleeing. By 1939, 400,000 Germans, 200,000 Spaniards, and 180,000 Italians had emigrated for political reasons. During World War II more than 800,000 persons of German extraction were transferred to Germany, "back home to the Reich", and resettled there. As a result of recruiting measures and deportation about 10 million foreign workers came to Germany during the war. Owing to air raids 10 million Germans were forced to leave the towns and cities and were evacuated to rural areas. After Germany's collapse endless treks of refugees from the East German territo-

²⁶¹ By the editor

ries who were systematically expelled, above all in 1946, on the strength of the Potsdam Agreement of August 2nd, 1945, moved westwards. Indeed, there is still an influx of refugees from the east into Western Germany. At present there are more than 12 million refugees living in the four occupied zones of Germany, and of these, 7.8 million are living in Western Germany. In addition, there are still 440,000 foreigners living in Western Germany. By the autumn of 1950, the number of displaced persons, however, had dropped to 130,000.²⁶² As a result of the upheaval in East Asia, and in China in particular, more than 20 million persons have been rendered homeless.²⁶³ The outcome of all these migrations, that is to say, whether they will spread and will sweep along other peoples in their course, cannot as yet be foreseen. The following remarks on the subject of the East German expellees and their right of domicile apply to all those persons who have been forced to leave their homes and their native country.

The East German expellees have been forced to renounce traditional and cultural values which have been theirs for hundreds of years. They have been forced to renounce a country which was settled and cultivated and developed by their ancestors throughout many generations. Again and again their thoughts revert to their homes and their native towns and villages which they were forced to leave. Again and again they seek to find some explanation and some justification for the fate which has befallen them. The expellees have revived an old word, an ancient cultural value, namely "home". In recent years the word "home" to some extent lost its former significance and merely conjured up memories of national dress, old customs, and local traditions.

It was only in communal law that the term "home" still retained its former meaning, namely that persons, when in trouble and distress, were, from the legal point of view, members of a community. An indication of what "home" should mean to a person was given in the conditions stipulated as regards the duration of domicile, which was necessary for a person to be regarded as a member of a community from the legal point of view. It is significant that those districts in Germany where the former conception of "home" in the truest sense still held good made the greatest demands as regards duration of domicile. In Bavaria, for instance, a person had to prove that he or she had lived in the state for seven years uninterruptedly in order to be regarded as a member of the community, whereas in most of the other districts of Germany a

²⁶² Dr Martin Kornrumpf (Bavarian Ministry of the Interior, Munich), *Deutschland — gestern — heute — morgen. Der Strukturwandel durch die Aufnahme von 12 Millionen Heimatvertriebenen*, p 1., and *Europäische Forschungsgruppe*, Reports, 1st Edition, October 15, 1951, pp 1-2. Edited by Dr. Kornrumpf and Dr Pfeil, Bavarian Ministry of the Interior, Munich.

²⁶³ *Ueberblick ueber die Entwicklung des europaischen Fluechtlingsproblems von 1918 - 1947*, p. 18 Edited by Zentralbuero des Hilfswerkes der evangelischen Kirchen in Deutschland Published by Quell Verlag der evangelischen Gesellschaft in Stuttgart, 1947

domicile of two years' duration sufficed.²⁶⁴ In order to understand the attitude of the Church as regards the conception of home and the right of domicile, it is first of all necessary to ascertain exactly what "home" really means. Is the word "home" merely used to imply the place where one happens to be domiciled, or has it a deeper significance which involves sociological and human values in general?

The word "home" means "the house in which one lives", "the house, outbuildings, and plot of land on which the house is situated", "the enclosed land on which the house stands", "one's parents' house", "the place from which one hails, that is to say one's native town or village".²⁶⁵ In the wider sense "home" means "the country or district where one was born or where one has one's permanent residence, that is to say one's native town or village or one's domicile, one's parents' home and property".²⁶⁶ The extent to which man's favourable development depends upon his home is expressed in the German language by the word which was originally used to describe the state into which man falls when he is far away from home, namely "Elend", which means wretchedness, distress, misery. "The original meaning of this word, the use of which can be said to have been inspired by homesickness, was 'dwelling abroad, far away from home', and it is connected with the Latin, 'exsul, exsilium' and 'extra solum'".²⁶⁷ In German "abroad" was not used to mean "foreign land" until the eighteenth century.²⁶⁸ The word "Elend" gradually came to mean human distress, misery, and suffering, a meaning which is of course also connected with the effects of losing one's home. "As being far away from home and exile make man unhappy and miserable, 'Elend' gradually came to mean 'misericordia' and its original meaning was eventually lost."²⁶⁹ It is thus obvious from the above that "home" means more than simply the place where one lives. It implies a place to which one is deeply attached, to which one has certain obligations, and which affords protection and security.²⁷⁰ It implies the original ties existing between man, his native country, his property, and his fellow-countrymen; to all these he is so deeply attached that he finds

²⁶⁴ Father Alfred Delp, S J, *Zur Erde entschlossen*, p. 74 Lectures and essays, published by Jos Knecht, Carolusdruckerei in Frankfurt/Main, 1949 — Grentrup, *Nationale Minderheiten und Katholische Kirche*. Berlin, 1927 — Grentrup, *Die kirchliche Rechtslage der deutschen Minderheiten katholischer Konfessionen in Europa*. Berlin, 1928 — Raimund Meyer, *Religion und Muttersprache*. Innsbrucker Studien fuer Religionswissenschaft und Voelkerkunde, Innsbruck — Beda Kleinschmidt, „Auslandsdeutschum und Kirche“, Nos 19—22 of *Deutschum und Ausland*, edited by Georg Schreiber Muenster/Westphalia, 1930. — Josef Mausbach, „Nationalismus und christlicher Universalismus“ in *Katholische Ideenwelt*. Muenster/Westphalia, 1921

²⁶⁵ J and W Grimm, *Deutsches Woerterbuch*, Vol. IV, Pt 2, p 855

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p 865.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol III, p 406.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, Vol I, p 900.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol III, p 409

²⁷⁰ Delp, *loc cit.*, p 74 ff

it hard to adapt himself to other surroundings and conditions when he becomes homeless, and consequently is extremely unhappy and miserable. The conception of "home" is thus based on a permanent relationship between man, country, objects, and customs. "Home is a feeling of permanency translated into thoughts and sentiments. And because of this feeling of home, man as an individual, as a family, or as a group is bound by fate to a certain piece of land and is, as it were, under its spell".²⁷¹ "Home is, in the first place, a sociological creation".²⁷² From the foregoing it is therefore evident that "home" is not, in the first place, the village or house in which one lives, the fixtures and furniture of the house, or the domestic pets one has, but primarily far-reaching human institutions and values. 'By home we mean the social and political problem of space, the cultural and historical question of time, and the sociological product of community. These questions when analysed in all their aspects resolve into a metaphysical question pertaining to the fundamental principles and ideas of man'.²⁷³

"Home", therefore, above all implies a feeling of permanency, but there must also be some spiritual link with actual property. Normally, man only feels he has a native country if he has a home, that is to say some spot where he has a feeling of personal security. It would, for instance, be interesting to ascertain from which districts in Germany those Germans hail who are at present joining the Foreign Legion. Probably only very few of them come from Bavaria, whilst the majority of them are men from the East German territories who have been deprived of their homes and their native country. Most persons normally need to have a feeling of permanency, of belonging somewhere, otherwise they are likely to be swallowed up in political quicksands. Where this feeling of permanency is lacking it must be replaced by delving into the historical spheres of the nation.

The second important factor on which the conception of "home" is based is time, that is to say, the spot one regards as home must have been acquired by constant effort. Thus a man who speculates in land will never look upon the land he buys as "home". A feeling of permanency can originate from the history and tradition of one's family when these two factors are bound up with the land in question. Man must be conscious of belonging to a series of generations. "We do not understand the purpose of this order of one generation giving place to the next, generations upon whose existence the temporal value of "home" depends, nor do we understand the first beginnings and ultimate end of this moving chain since we cannot see into the sphere beyond, where the links of this chain are welded. If, however, we regard an individual life that does not fit into the chain, which links past and future together, as a fragment which has no purpose, then we have indeed realized that this

²⁷¹ M H Boehm, *Das eigenstaendige Volk*, p 100. Goettingen, 1932

²⁷² Kurt Stavenhagen, *Heimat als Grundlage menschlicher Existenz*, p 27
Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, Goettingen, 1939

²⁷³ Delp, *loc. cit*, p 78.

order of generations is valid".²⁷⁴ Whence it follows that history plays a vital part in arousing in man a conscious feeling of home. "The wider temporal conception of 'home' is determined by all those events in the course of the history of our country which helped to mould those whose inheritance we have entered on, whose name we bear, and who, in the course of all the vicissitudes which befell our native country, tried their strength and either succeeded or failed. Man is bound and pledged to his native country, that is to his home, by history, and it is history which prevents the conception of home from degenerating into a primitive and plebeian ideal".²⁷⁵

Those factors which, in the opinion of most people, constitute home thus recede into the background. Man's conception of home depends on his mental and spiritual attitude, which is determined by the human community of which he is a member. His parents' house is home to him because he has grown up there with his brothers and sisters, has been loved and sheltered by his parents, and has experienced the kindness and help of his neighbours. "Home to any group of persons is the community, the unit in itself as it were, in which they all share a communal and united life".²⁷⁶ This spiritual communal life can play such a decisive part in determining man's conception of home that a community which has no home in the concrete sense can nevertheless become a man's home, as for instance when a number of persons serve a common cause. An officer may live in such close companionship with his men that this communal life becomes home to him; in like manner the communal life in a monastery or convent may come to mean home to the members of a religious order. As a rule, however, the average person is not satisfied with a solution of this kind and needs a home in the concrete sense, otherwise he tends to become a vagrant.²⁷⁷ It is thus evident that home, in the deeper and truer sense, is something abstract. Man must always have the feeling of belonging to and being bound to a certain spot and a certain community. And an important factor for his healthy development, mentally and physically, is his home. "Home is synonymous with strength. He who has a home has roots; and he who has roots has health and a firm hold on life... He who has a home can be likened to a ship in a great depth of water. His course is calmer and steadier than that of a man who is homeless, for he is less likely to be tossed about by the waves. Since he who has a home is healthy and has a feeling of security, his character and mind are better able to develop uniformly than those of a man who is homeless. He who has a home always manifests clearly marked tastes and preferences; they are a characteristic sign by which he can be recognized".²⁷⁸ The ties which

²⁷⁴ Stavenhagen, *loc. cit.*, p. 49.

²⁷⁵ Delp, *loc. cit.*, p. 83

²⁷⁶ Stavenhagen, *loc. cit.*, p. 52

²⁷⁷ Delp, *loc. cit.*, p. 84

²⁷⁸ *Volk und Geist* (Series of publications on national culture), No 8 ("Home"), p. 75 (Essay by W. Pfeleiderer), and p. 59 (Essay by P. Bultmann). Published by Verlag der Arbeitsgemeinschaft, Berlin, 1925

exist between man and his home are thus not only of vital importance and advantageous, inasmuch as they make life easier for him, but they are also absolutely essential to and part of his life. This fact has been proved by Karl Stavenhagen, on the strength of his own personal experience as a German domiciled in Baltic territory, in his profound work, which is quoted here. "Has not the Creator conceived a plan of life which man is not forced to carry out by a natural causality, but which he should seek to carry out if he wishes to be true to the conception of man and the conception of the individual? Surely the ties between man and home are also part of this plan, and a life without a home is, it is true, not immoral, but certainly undeveloped and crippled, as it were, and but a fragment of what life should be".²⁷⁹ Home thus constitutes an essential part of man's life since it makes him fitted to face life in general. Man's need for a home in the concrete sense is merely an indication of his need for a home in the abstract sense. It is by no means a coincidence that the problem of fear and the insecurity of life in general is the main question with which modern philosophy is concerned, for man's sociological and metaphysical homelessness is increasing to an alarming extent.

Man's need for a home is closely connected with his attitude to religion and God. It is only when man once more becomes aware of his relationship to God (his religion), and thus to the highest protection and security, that he finds a home again. Man is bound to the quintessence of life by his earthly home.²⁸⁰ Man's earthly home, the happiness and strength it affords, is merely an indication of the ultimate state to which man shall attain. "Man is obliged to enter into ties since he has, from time immemorial, always been bound by ties; and he is bound to his country, his race, his history, and his culture because God has ordained that people of the same race and kind, of the same country and history, should be united. Only a man who regards home in this light and comprehends its profound reality will be loyal to it. Home means many things: one's country, property, one's parents' house, one's childhood, family, history, culture, one's occupation, and the persons to whom one owes a certain duty; and finally, home, as represented by all these things, is one's own personal relationship and closeness to God. Because of his awareness of the universe man knows that all these things are interconnected and that he is affirming his faith in the true order of life by acknowledging the vital importance of man's home. Because of his awareness in this respect man knows that it is truly noble to serve one's home and be loyal to it. Und if this service should involve the greatest risk and the greatest sacrifice, then it is, provided that the conception of home is comprehended in its truest and deepest sense, a going home to God, Who is our Eternal Home".²⁸¹ By his premature and violent

²⁷⁹ Stavenhagen, *loc. cit.*, p 17.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid*, p 108

²⁸¹ Delp, *loc. cit*, pp 91—92

death — he was executed on February 2nd, 1945, at the age of thirty-seven, because he opposed National Socialism — Father Delp undoubtedly proved that God must be obeyed before man.

Since home is thus to be comprehended in its deepest sense, it is only natural that the Church should concern itself with man's earthly home, and that it therefore never ceases to stress man's right to the home which has been his heritage for hundreds of years. The Church realizes only too well that persons who have no home are in danger of becoming demoralized. The Church thus exhorts all expellees and all those, who are able to help in any way whatsoever, to create a new home for those who are homeless. For in this case one of man's oldest rights is involved. Thus Goethe says in *Faust*. "A right born with us, grievous to relate, seems never the affair of Bench or Bar." Certain rights are born with us, or rather, we are born with certain rights which were not laid down by man, but existed naturally, long before states and powers were created. The fundamental principle of every right is that every man should be given his due, that is to say, to each his own. The oldest and fundamental rights to which man is entitled are the right to live, the right to equality and freedom, and, based on these, the right to individuality, self-preservation, self-improvement, the right to marry, to raise a family, and to educate one's children, the right to work, to fair wages, to property, and the right to lead the life befitting a human being. And one of these natural rights is the right to a home.²⁸² Since ancient times and up to the present the Church, as represented by its earliest founders, by religious scholars (Thomas Aquinas)²⁸³, by the messages to the world of Pope Pius IX²⁸⁴, Pope Leo XIII²⁸⁵, Pope Pius XI²⁸⁶, and Pope Pius XII²⁸⁷, has always supported this doctrine of natural rights²⁸⁸, despite all the opposition and hostility it has met with on this account. Throughout its entire history the Church has always defended man's rights and helped the suppressed and the weak. "Oppor-tune — importune", in season, out of season²⁸⁹, the Church has continued to proclaim the laws of Christ to a world, which allowed itself to be influenced again and again by the erroneous principle of right or wrong, my country, or to put it differently, what is to the advantage of my people is right, and might is right.

²⁸² Cf Prof P Hirschmann, S J, "Das Naturrecht der Ostvertriebenen", lecture held at Hedwigs Academy, Lippstadt, on October 16, 1947 Printed in series of publications of the Academy

²⁸³ II II qu 101 art 3

²⁸⁴ Syll Pius IX, Dec 8, 1864, m 39 and 56.

²⁸⁵ Papal message, "Rerum novarum", May 15. 1891

²⁸⁶ Papal message to missions, "Rerum Ecclesiae", February 28, 1926

²⁸⁷ Address on Christmas Eve, 1945

²⁸⁸ *Romans*, II, 15 "in that they (the Gentiles) shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness therewith, and their thoughts one with another accusing or else excusing them"

²⁸⁹ II *Timothy*, IV, 2

The Church has at all times, on behalf of mankind, exhorted those in power in this world to remember that man has certain inviolable rights with which no state power may interfere, since God has conferred them upon man. After World War II, when men were being tried in Nuremberg for having committed Nazi crimes against humanity, and when about 15 million Germans in the east and south-east territories which had formerly belonged to Germany were deprived of their home by the stroke of a pen and were forcibly expelled, millions of persons who had been deprived of their rights looked to the Church to help them and to defend their rights. They were well aware of the fact that the Church has no worldly instruments of power at its disposal, but they relied on its moral strength to stir the conscience of the world and cause steps to be taken to put a stop to the dreadful crimes which were being committed in the East German territories. And they were not disappointed in this respect. The Church proclaimed to the whole world that the expulsion of at least 15 million persons from East German territories (about 10 million Germans from the territory east of the Oder-Neisse Line, 3 million Sudeten Germans, 1 million Germans from Poland proper, 1 million Germans from Hungary, Roumania, and South Slovakia, etc.), namely from what had been their home for hundreds of years, was an infamous injustice from the Christian and moral point of view. A peace treaty containing a clause sanctioning such an injustice would from the start be doomed to disaster. For hundreds of years the ancestors of the expellees toiled and slaved and developed this territory and made it prosperous. The people of the East German territories can thus lay claim to their native country on the strength of natural rights, all the more so since Germany, which has been reduced in size by one-fourth, is no longer able to provide the majority of them with a new and suitable livelihood. The injustice of these expulsions is all the greater since they have been effected with such brutality and ruthlessness that millions of persons have thereby perished (the American Committee against Mass Expulsion has estimated that 4.8 million persons from the East German territories lost their lives in the course of the expulsions. Statistics in Germany actually reveal that there are now only about 11 million expellees still alive of the 15 to 16 million persons who were turned out of their homes.). In addition, the expellees were robbed of all their belongings and were reduced to beggary by the time they arrived in Western Germany.

Property which a person acquires by his own toil and work, as was the case with the persons in the East German territories, or which he inherits from his ancestors, who for generations have worked to acquire it and to develop the country, must be regarded as legally acquired property. The act of depriving a person of such property, whether for the purpose of transferring it to the state or to an individual, is therefore a violation of the laws which govern the order or system of society. Nor can such a violation be excused on the plea that the state has the right to seize private property for the common good in urgent cases. The state is only authorized to do so within certain limits, and provided

that an appropriate and just compensation is made. Thus, even in cases where the cession of territory is justified on the strength of a fair peace treaty, the private property of the former owners cannot simply be seized as a matter of course, since such an act is a violation of man's natural right to property. Nor can the forcible seizure of property belonging to Germans and their subsequent expulsion be justified, on the grounds that such measures are reprisals in order to punish those who are to blame for the war and the atrocities committed during the war. According to the principles of justice, only someone who is really guilty may be punished. The majority of persons in the East German territories were in no way to blame for the war and themselves suffered for years under the tyranny of the Third Reich. — The Church has also pointed out to the rest of the world that expulsion and homelessness are bound to have serious and far-reaching effects on the religious and moral development of the persons concerned, in particular young people.

The founder of the modern science of international law, Francisco de Vitoria²⁹⁰, a Spanish Dominican priest (born about 1483 to 1486, died August 12, 1546), who based some of his theories on those of Thomas Aquinas, stressed the basic rights to which every nation is entitled. Over a hundred years before Hugo Grotius dealt with this same subject, Francisco de Vitoria, in the course of the lectures he held as a professor in Salamanca (1526 to 1546), proved that no nation, race, or community is ever a nonentity, but at all times a legal subject whose rights must be respected. God has ordained that such a community should possess property, family, a certain organic structure, and historical values and power, and these things must therefore be respected by others. According to Francisco de Vitoria, a nation, race, or community does not even forfeit its rights and its social order if it is guilty of committing a deadly sin.²⁹¹ The problems which have arisen in connection with the East German territories, questions which cannot be compared with any former changes in the delimitation of frontiers, are a threat to Germany's existence. The people of the East German territories are not authorized to renounce the property of their ancestors. By effecting and sanctioning the expulsion of the Germans from the east territories and approving the territorial changes which have been introduced in Eastern Germany the Occupation Powers have failed in their duty as trustees²⁹², and have violated the terms of the Atlantic Charter of August 12,

²⁹⁰ *Die Kirche in der Welt* (publication on sociological work of the Catholic Church at present time), No 1, 1947, p 68 ff. Aschendorff, Muenster — In connection with this subject cf also Franz von Liszt's definition of basic rights of nations in his treatise on international law (1925)

²⁹¹ For details on life and work of Francisco de Vitoria cf Joseph Hoeffner, *Christentum und Menschenwurde. Das Anliegen der spanischen Koloniaethik im goldenen Zeitalter*, p 184 ff. Paulinus Verlag, Trier, 1947.

²⁹² Cf Hermann von Mangoldt, *Grundsatzliches zum Neuaufbau einer deutschen Staatsgewalt*, p 12, No. 2 (1947), of series of publications by the Institute for International Law, Kiel University

1941²⁹³, in which the signatories declared that their countries would not seek to obtain any territorial accessions or other advantages. The violation of man's basic rights means the end of the community of nations.²⁹⁴ The nations would be spared much suffering, and future threats to peace would be avoided, if only they would follow the advice which Francisco de Vitoria gives us in his work on the subject of the rules to be observed when conducting a war "Once the war is over and a victory has been won, the latter should be enjoyed in moderation and with Christian humility, and the victor should consider himself to be the judge for two states, the state which is the damaged party, and the state which has caused the damage; the victor should pass judgment, not as a prosecutor, but as a judge, in such a manner that the state which is the damaged party receives compensation which should, however, involve as little hardship and evil as possible for the state which was the offender; individual offenders should only be punished within reason. The grounds for this are that among Christian nations all the blame rests with the rulers, for the subjects fight for their ruler and act in good faith, and it is therefore a great injustice if, to quote the poet, the Greeks are punished for all the follies committed by kings."²⁹⁵

For all these reasons the Church demands, in the name of justice, humanity, and Christianity and in the interests of a lasting peace, that all those persons who have been expelled from the East German territories should receive compensation and that their native country should once more be restored to them. The following extract from a message by the Pope is only one of the many proclamations issued by the Church on this subject.

**Extract from Pope Pius XII's Message to the German Bishops,
on March 1st, 1948²⁹⁶**

The problem of the refugees from the east, who have been turned out of their homes and expelled from their country and property without receiving any compensation and have been sent to Germany, deserves our special attention.

In this connection it is not so much the legal, economic, and political aspects of the measures which have been adopted, measures unprecedented in the past history of Europe, with which we are concerned. History will pass judgment on these aspects, and we fear that this judgment will not be lenient. We are aware of all that happened during the war in the vast territory extending from the Vistula to the Volga.

²⁹³ *Europa-Archiv*, p 18 Edited by Wilh Cornides and published by Europa-Archiv, Oberursel/Taunus, 1946

²⁹⁴ Cf Rudolf Laun, *Das Recht auf die Heimat*, in particular p 12 ff. Hermann Schroedel Verlag, Hanover and Darmstadt, 1951

²⁹⁵ *Die Kirche in der Welt* (loose-leaf encyclopedia), p 70 Published by Aschendorff, Muenster, 1947.

²⁹⁶ Cf *Amtsblatt der Erzdiözese Muenchen und Freising*, 1948, supplement to No 6, p. 3 ff.

But was such a counter-measure, namely the expulsion of twelve million people from their homes and farms and their exposure to misery and suffering, justified? Are not the majority of the victims in this case persons who were in no way to blame for the crimes and misdeeds committed during the war, persons who had no influence on them whatsoever? And such a counter-measure surely cannot be regarded as politically sound and economically justifiable if one considers the vital needs of the German nation and the welfare of the whole of Europe. Are we not justified in wishing and hoping that all concerned may reflect on these things in all calmness and undo what has been done, provided that this can be undone?

Our and your most serious care and burden, however, is the religious distress of the expellees, — not so much in the case of those expellees who have been transferred to districts which are mainly Catholic, where the church, the priests, the Catholic school and the religious life of the community are the same as they were in their native towns or villages, but rather the religious need of the millions of Catholic refugees who are now living scattered in various districts where the Catholic Church has, since the schism, hardly been able to gain a footing, and where the religious life of the community must first of all be developed anew. We are deeply troubled at the reports we have received concerning the great difficulties involved in administering some of these remote districts, which are separated from their diocese by zonal frontiers, and concerning the shortage of priests and the indescribable burden of work which the priests there are obliged to take upon themselves, the religious isolation and danger to which the Catholic refugees, grown-ups and, in particular, children, in such districts are exposed. And for this reason we beg and exhort the German clergy, the secular clergy, the monks, the nuns, and clerical lay assistants to do everything in their power to remedy this situation.

We appointed Bishop Maximilian Kaller to administer to the religious needs of the refugees, in the first place so that he might deal with the problem of the shortage of priests in the remote and scattered Catholic districts. He set about this task with the courage, spirit, and self-sacrifice, which was so much a part of his personality, but to our great sorrow he was unexpectedly called to his everlasting home, and his work thus remained unfinished, indeed, it was only in its first stages. In the meantime an entirely new situation has arisen as regards religious matters, a situation which is due to the various transfers of population in your country and which will render more extensive measures necessary. We are convinced that the German clergy, once it has fully realized the seriousness of the present situation, will gladly, whole-heartedly, and voluntarily devote itself to the apostolic task which awaits it and must be accomplished without further delay.

During the time that we held office in your country we came to know and esteem the devoutness and profound faith of the Catholics of Eastern Germany. We still recall the proud spectacle of Catholic Ger-

many in Breslau, in 1926, which was for the most part a manifestation of the strength of the Catholic Church in the East German territories and an expression of Catholic faith and Catholic loyalty to the Church and the Pope, as we ourselves, deeply moved, told the late Cardinal Adolf Bertiam, on our return to Berlin from Breslau. In view of the dreadful fate which has in the meantime befallen the population of the East German territories, we now think of those days with sorrow in our heart.

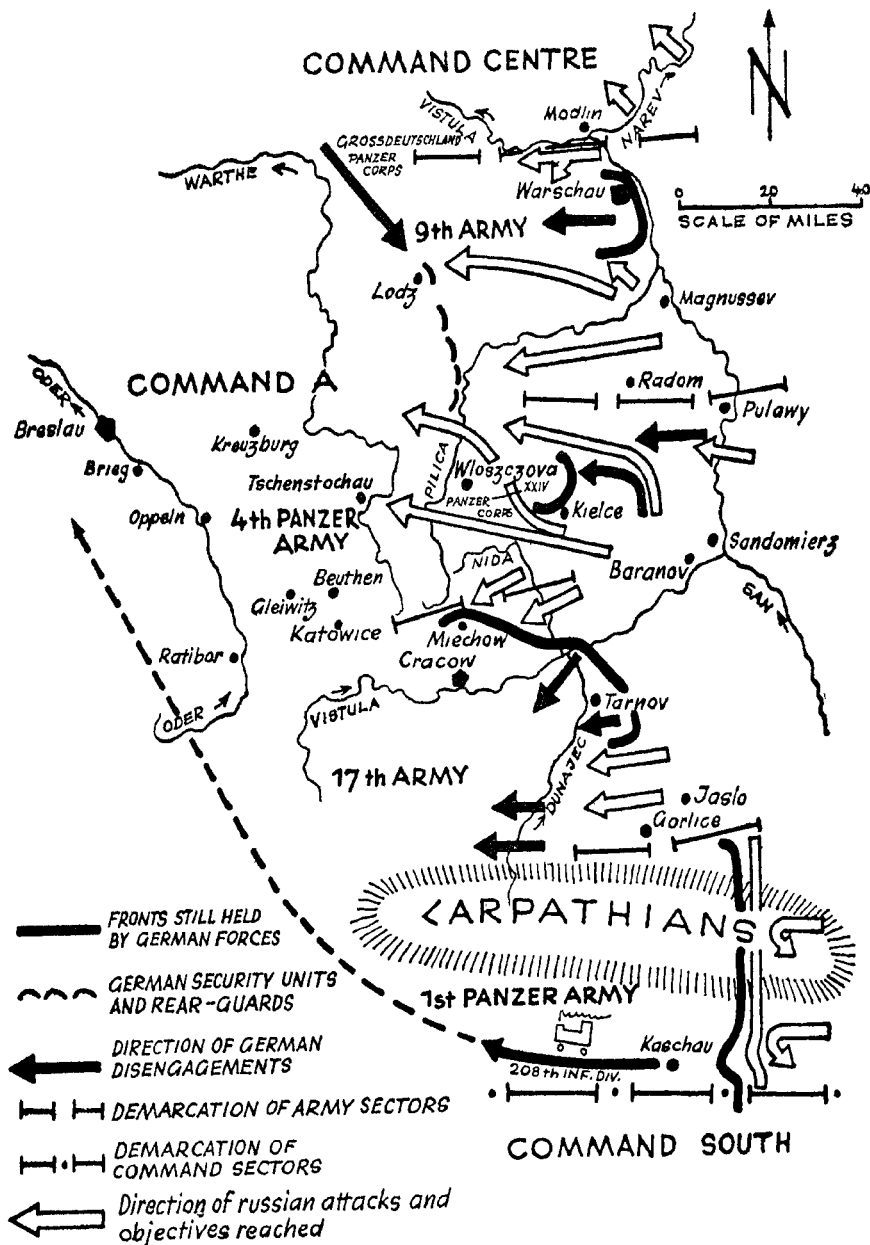
The Catholic refugees from the east may rest assured that the ties which now exist between them and the Head of the Church are much closer than they were in those former times. We for our part admonish them, come what may, to guard that faith in their hearts which was instilled into them in their childhood by their parents, their priests, and their bishops. The church in which they were baptized may have been destroyed or it may be lost to them for ever, but their baptismal vows accompany them all their life, wherever they may be exiled, and these vows must be kept. It is with great joy that we have learnt that many of the Catholic refugees who are living in remote districts, in which the Catholic Church has as yet gained no footing, are nevertheless leading a religious life in keeping with the doctrines of the Catholic Church and in accordance with the words of Tobit to his fellow-countrymen and fellow-believers, "Because he (God) hath therefore scattered you among the gentiles, that you may declare his wonderful works, and make them know that there is no other almighty God besides him" (*Book of Tobit*, XIII, 4). Though they may sow in sorrow at present, it is our prayer that the seed may bear fruit a hundredfold for the Kingdom of God on German soil.

The accommodation of twelve million people in a country which has not only suffered war and defeat, but has also been obliged to cede some of its territory and has thus been reduced in size, has resulted in much suffering, hardship, and distress, which so far could not be alleviated. For this reason the Catholic refugees from the east will realize that time and patience are needed to set up new religious communities in their midst. We exhort all those who have been spared the sorrow of losing their homes to help the refugees in every way, even though this may mean much sacrifice on their part. Charity and sympathy on the one hand, and humility and gratitude on the other hand, manifested in the spirit of Jesus Christ, Our Divine Pattern, will not, it is true, overcome all the present difficulties, but will at least make them easier to bear. We exhort all of you, but especially all the refugees from the east, to remember St. Peter's words, "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time; casting all your anxiety upon him, because he careth for you" (*I. Peter*, V, 6)...

Appendix

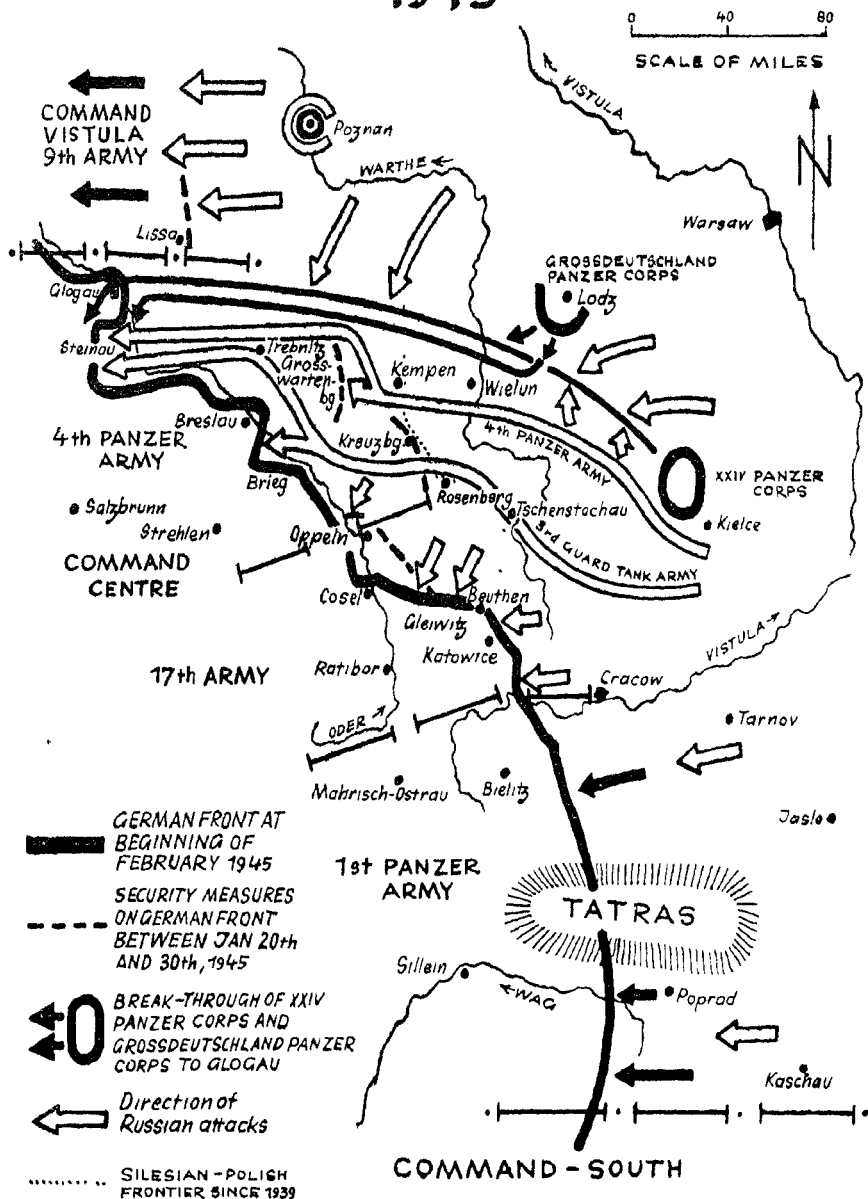
SKETCH II

Position of Command A on Jan. 16/17, 1945



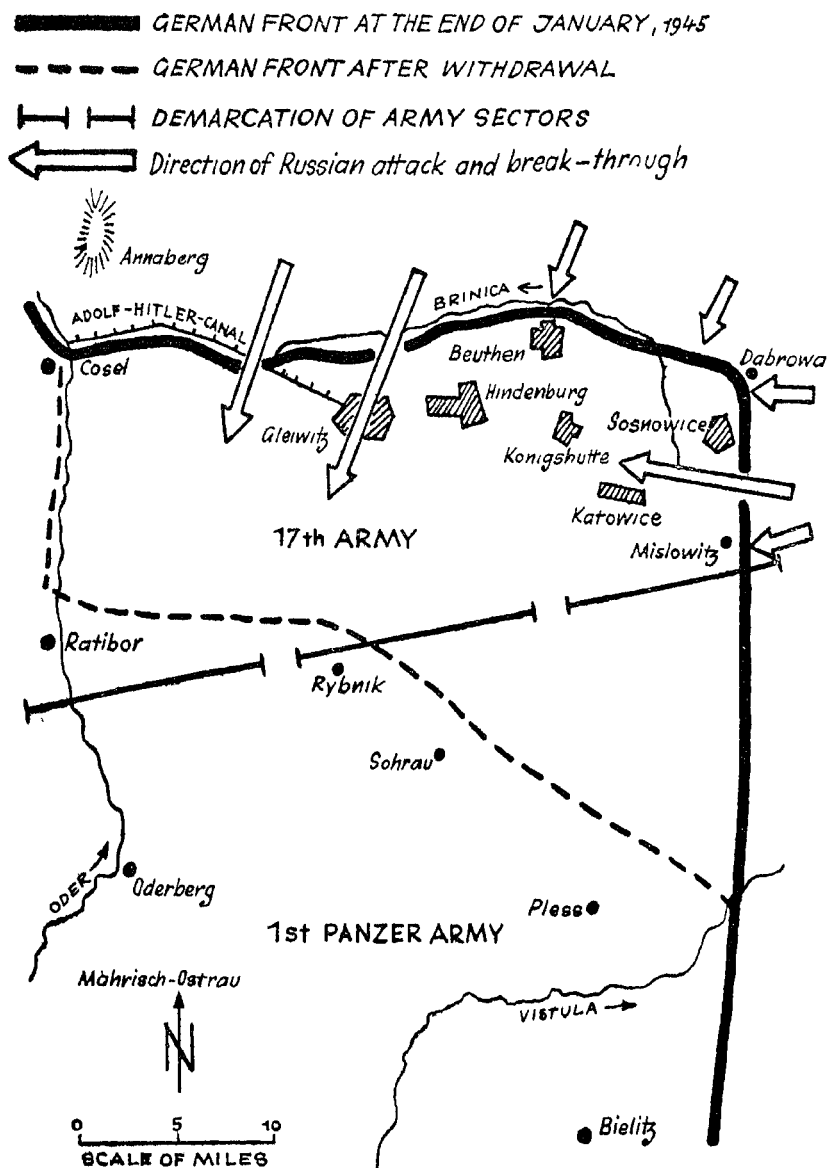
SKETCH III

Position of armies of Command Centre between Jan. 20th and 31st 1945



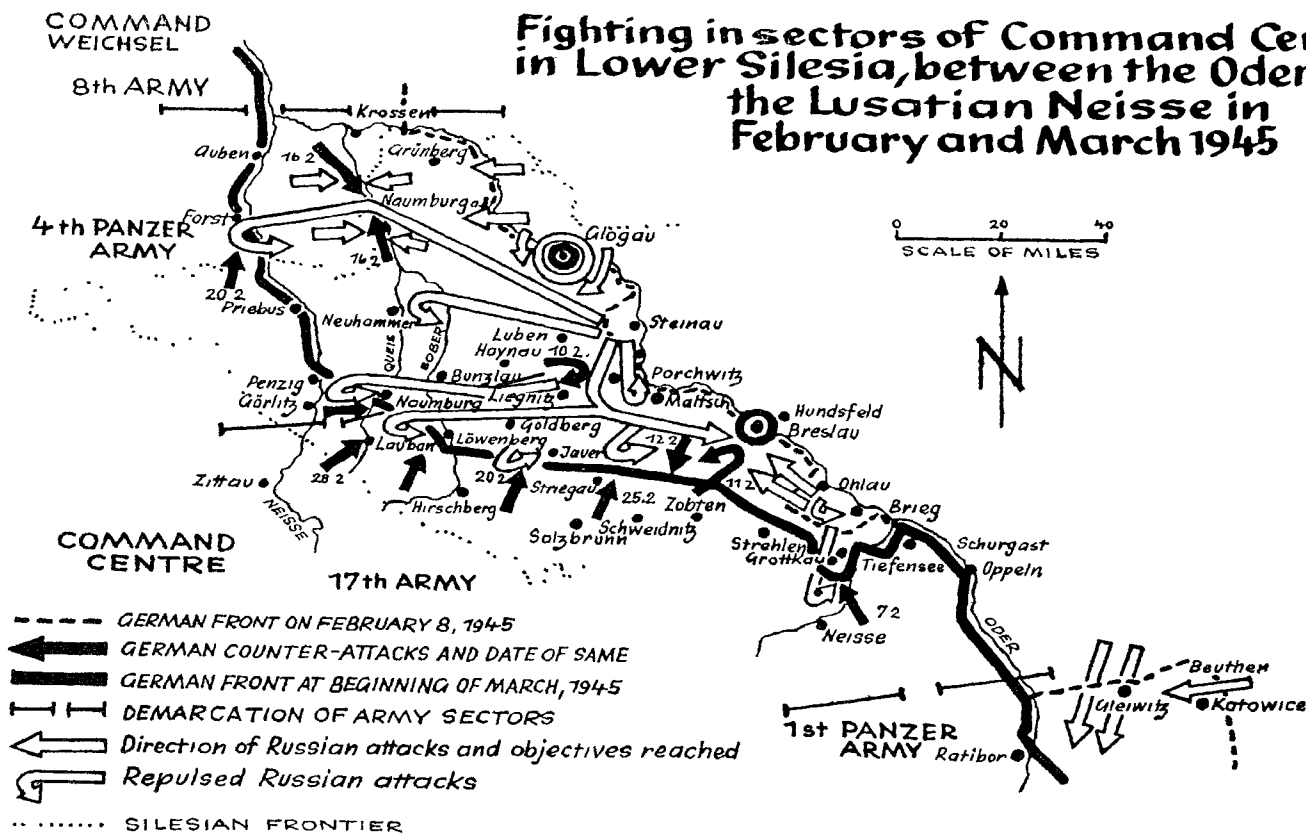
SKETCH IV

Defense of Upper Silesian Industrial District in January and February, 1945

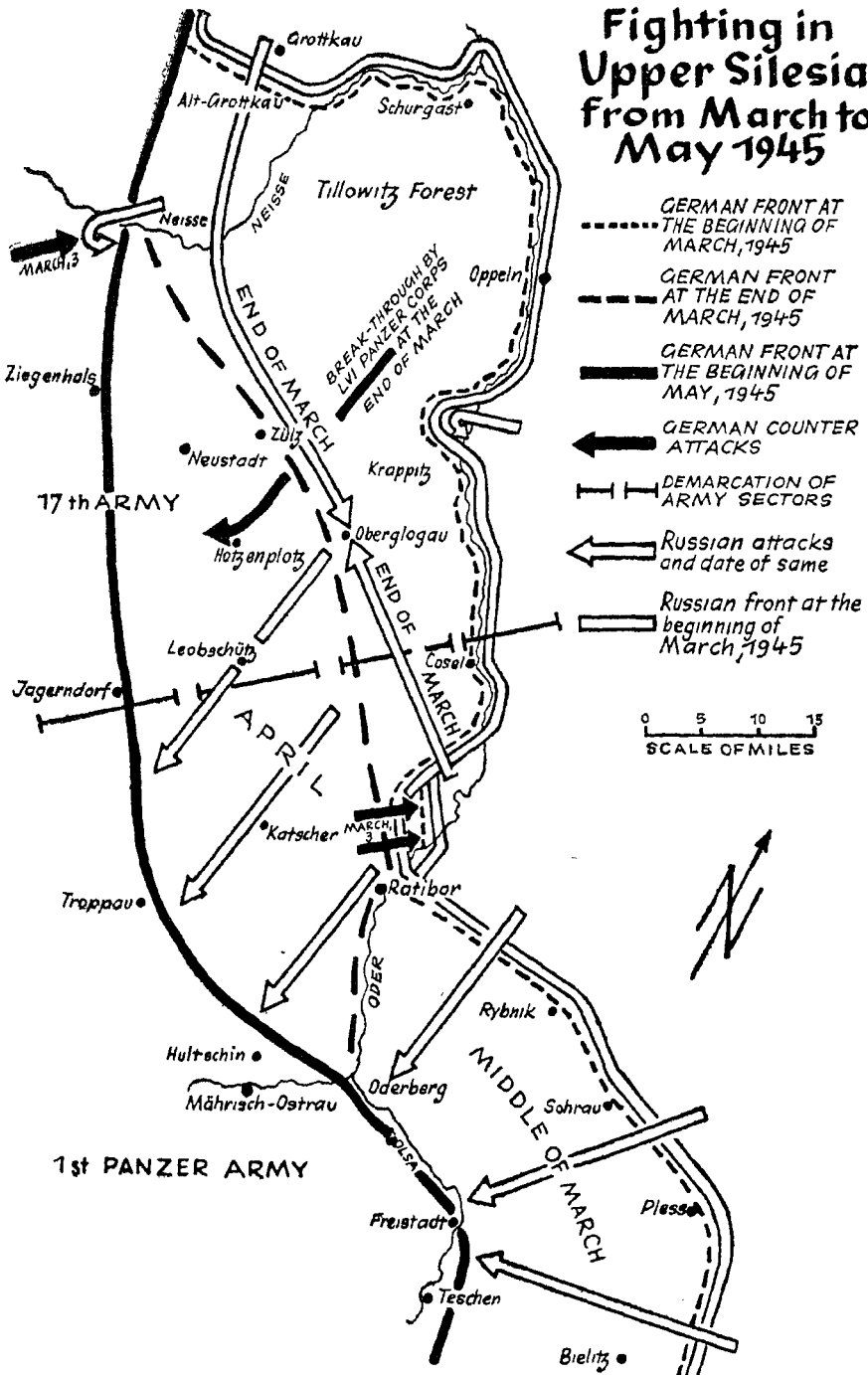


SKETCH V

Fighting in sectors of Command Centre
in Lower Silesia, between the Oder and
the Lusatian Neisse in
February and March 1945

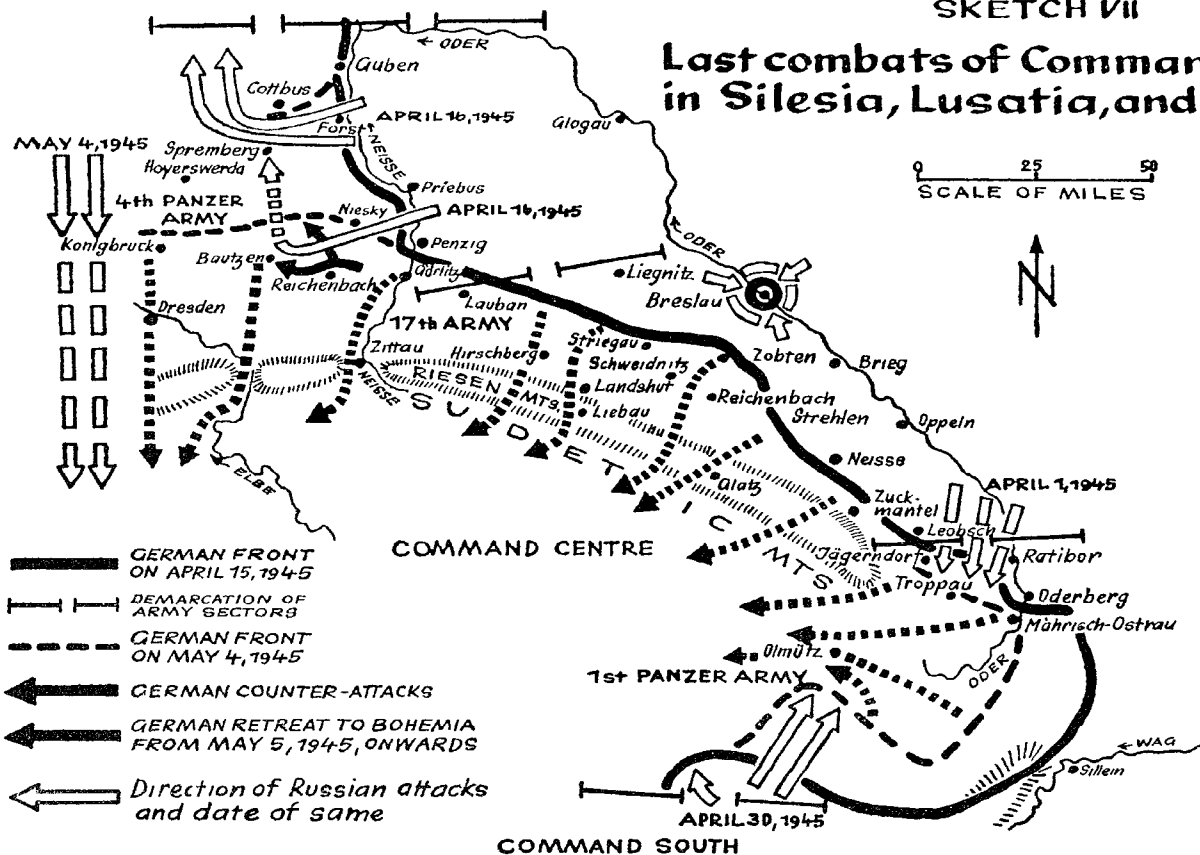


Fighting in Upper Silesia from March to May 1945



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